Mahatma Gandhi

LIFE, IDEOLOGY & THOUGHTS

A Vision for 21st Century

Edited by

Raj Kumar
Vijendra Kumar

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This book contains a collection of essays on the life, ideology and thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi. These essays will always continue to be of topical interest as most of them throw light on several factors that are of consequence to the economic and social policies of our country.

The Gandhian ideals of truth, non-violence, universal brotherhood, decentralised democracy, socialism and secularism have the potential to act as beacons and guide us in the 21st century as we step into the next century.

This book besides its academic value, will prove of utmost use for students, scholars, teachers, researchers, educational thinkers and those having a layman's interest in the subject. The book will be of invaluable utility to the present and future policy makers and administrators as it contains a clear-cut vision for the 21st century.

The book contains the following:

- *Preface*
- Early Life of Gandhi
- Gandhi's Style of Functioning
- Gandhi and Children
- How to Train the Young
- Understanding Gandhi
- The Moral Fervour of Gandhi
- Truth and Non-Violence
- Faith as a Basis for Action
- Gandhian Feminist Ethics

ISBN 81-7594-035-2

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MANGAL DEEP

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Edited by :

RAJ KUMAR

VIJENDRA KUMAR

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MANGAL DEEP PUBLICATIONS

JAIPUR (INDIA)

First Published 1999

ISBN 81-7594-035-2

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Published by:
Mangal Deep Publications
906, Punch Mukhi Hanuman
Behind Khetri House
Jaipur - 302 016 (INDIA)
Ph.: 0141 { 303669
306013

Laser Typeset by:
Tejal PageMakers
Ph.: 0141-650283

Printed at:
JAGRITI OFFSET, New Delhi - 110028
Delhi

Preface

There is no death of literature on Gandhi and Nehru. Both the Indian as well as the foreign writers have written very extensively on Gandhi. It is however, felt that knowledge about Gandhian thoughts and ideology needs to be given to school and college students in a regular way and especially in the changed circumstances.

India is entering the twenty-first century as a free country and is emerging as a big power in the world.

Indian leaders as well as the coming generations need to remember the hardships faced during the freedom struggle and the brilliant leadership provided by Gandhi. The present collection of essays on his life, ideologies and thoughts seem particularly relevant for today's strife-ridden world. The essays still contain valuable pearls of wisdom which can serve to enlighten and guide our policy-makers. Mahatma Gandhi's understanding of Indian philosophy and its practical application for socio-economic transformation and his visualisation of it as a powerful instrument in the amelioration of rural poverty made him one of the greatest economic thinkers of the time.

The author hopes that this collection of essays on Gandhian ideologies will help in formulation of sound policies to take our country into the 21st century and beyond.

The editors gratefully acknowledge the help taken from the library of Indian Council of Historical Research, and the library

of the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi. We are indebted to the innumerable sources we have consulted in the process of this work. We acknowledge the influence of the people who have directly or indirectly encouraged us in the project. We alone are responsible for any errors or omissions in the preparation of the book. Shri B.K. Mangal, in his indefatigable capacity as our publisher, has been inspiring and refreshing, his involvement has been a labour of love for us, the obligation, consequently has come to mean a truly enriching experience.

RAJ KUMAR
VIJENDRA KUMAR

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1

Early Life of Gandhi

Mohandas, the youngest of the four children of Karamchand Gandhi—more popularly known as "Kaba Gandhi"—Dewan of Porbandar and Putlibai, was naturally the pet of the family and was endearingly called 'Moniya' by his fond parents and other members of the household.

Moniya simply adored his mother. "The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory," he wrote in his *Autobiography* later, "is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious. She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers. Going to *Haveli*—the Vaishnava temple—was one of her daily duties. As far as my memory goes back, I do not remember her having ever missed the *Chaturmas*. She would take the hardest vows and keep them without flinching. Illness was no excuse for relaxing them. . . . To keep two or three consecutive fasts was nothing to her. Living on one meal a day during *Chaturmas* was a habit with her. Not content with that she fasted every alternate day during one *Chaturmas*."

During another *Chaturmas* she vowed not to have food without seeing the sun and Bapu relates how he, with other children, would go out watch the sun peep out of the clouds and how, immediately he caught a glimpse of the orb, he would run to his mother and call her out to see it, so that she might not miss her meal that day. Occasionally, when she ran out to see the

sun with her own eyes, the fugitive orb would be found to have gone behind the clouds again and she would be obliged to forego her meal. "That does not matter," she would say cheerfully, "God did not want me to eat today." And then she would return to her round of duties.

It was this mother of his who, not until he took the solemn oath, before the family priest and herself, that he would not touch 'wine, woman and meat' while in England, would give him her permission and blessings to proceed to England for his studies after he had passed his matriculation examination. He kept his vow faithfully, though his mother was not in the land of the living when he returned to India in 1891 after being called to the bar in England.

Next to his mother, there was another woman of whom Moniya was exceedingly fond and that was Rambha—his nurse and an old servant of the family—who loved him as if he were her own son. He had no secrets from her and it was she who taught him to overcome his childish fears about thieves, ghosts and serpents lurking in the darkness, by asking him to repeat Ramanama or the name of Rama, the divine hero of the Ramayana, whenever he felt scared at night.

"I think it is due to the seed sown by that good woman Rambha," wrote Bapu in his *Autobiography,* "that today Ramanama is an infallible remedy to me." Moniya as a child took delight in listening to the reading of the Ramayana of Tulasidas before his father and learnt also to recite the Ramaraksha by heart correctly every morning after the bath. That laid the foundation of his deep devotion to the Ramayana. "Today I regard the Ramayana of Tulasidas as the greatest book in all devotional literature," says Bapu in his *Autobiography.*

The Pauranic play *Harishchandra,* in which the King of that name sacrifices his all, including his kingdom, wealth, wife and child, to honour the word given by him, made a very deep impression on Mohandas when he was a boy. "Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra? . . . I asked myself day and night," he writes in his *Autobiography.* "To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through, was the

one ideal it inspired in me." Another play, that of Shravana, the youth who tended his aged and blind parents with unexampled devotion, also left an indelible impression on him.

Shri Prabhudas Gandhi, Bapu's nephew who in his childhood days had lived with Bapu in South Africa, gives the following further interesting information about Bapu's childhood which he had gathered from Bapu's elder sister Raliatbahen and other relatives.

"Moniya was a cheerful child. He would rush out of the house to play about. Rambha had to keep a very watchful eye on him. One day he followed a group of young girls to a lonely temple outside the city. Nobody saw him go with them. A search was made. Kaba Kaka sent people to every part of the town to look for him. The family had quite a few anxious hours until Moniya was brought home by one of the girls. Rambhabai never allowed him out of her sight after that.

Moniya seldom liked to stay at home. He would come for his meals and run away again to play in the compound of a nearby temple where he would climb trees or amuse himself in other ways. If one of his brothers pulled him down from a tree or beat him he would complain to his mother. His mother would ask why he did not hit back. His answer would be, 'How can you teach me to hit people? Why should I hit my brother? Why should I hit anybody?'

Putliba would wonder where her son got his strangely wise arguments.

When he began to go to school he took to his studies without any difficulty. He had very simple habits. Even in matters of food he would prefer simple fare to sweets and dainty dishes.

As today one sees children taking out little processions of their own with flags and all in imitation of their elders, in those days they played with clay images of gods and goddesses. Once young Mohan's companions decided to get hold of real images from a nearby temple instead of making do with little clay ones. All the children liked the idea. The youngest of them all was sent into the temple to bring away some of the images.

The little boy—let us call him Chandu here—got into the sanctum without any difficulty while the priest was having a siesta. He was collecting the small images when their tinkle reached the ears of the priest's wife. As she called out to the priest, Chandu took to his heels. Other boys also disappeared with the priest hot on their heels. Chandu dropped the images in the compound of another temple and all the boys escaped to their houses. Most of them were from the Gandhi family.

The priest having followed them to the home of the Gandhi family would not return without the images. He complained to Chandu's father, who was one of Mohan's cousins. Chandu's father, besides being a short-tempered man, was an orthodox worshipper. He could not ignore what he believed had been a sacrilege. He sent for Chandu, his elder brother and all the other children and interrogated them not without sternness. Nobody told him the truth.

Chandu's elder brother explained that they had been to the temple to play and that was all. But when young Mohan was called, simply and without fear he told the unalloyed truth. The incident convinced Mohan's companions that he could not be treated as one of them because of his simplicity and outspokenness.

Moniya was an adept at various games in vogue among children at the time. His role was that of a truthful witness in all these games. This was specially brought out in games played between Hindu and Muslim children in Shitla Chowk (square) near Gandhiji's house. In the evenings when the boys collected in the Chowk to play games Moniya would act as an unofficial referee even though he was among the youngest and the weakest of all.

The Hindu and Muslim boys would wrestle, and it was left to Moniya to decide who had been defeated. Once he had given his decision, there were no objections from either side. All the boys, whether Hindu or Muslim, agreed that Mohan's verdict was the right and truthful one."

Bapu's School Days

When Mohandas was about six or seven years of age, he

was placed in a primary school at Rajkot where his father had shifted the family from Porbandar. From this school he went to the suburban school and thence to the high school, having already reached his twelfth year. "I could only have been a mediocre student," says he about himself at this time. "I do not remember having ever told a lie, during this short period, either to my teachers or to my school-mates. I used to be very shy and avoided all company. My books and my lessons were my sole companions. To be at school at the stroke of the hour and to run back home as soon as the school closed—that was my daily habit. I literally ran back, because I could not bear to talk to anybody. I was even afraid lest anyone should poke fun at me."

When he was ten years old his father gave a feast to which Mohandas invited one of his friends. The principal dish served was mangoes. Through some mistake his young friend did not hear the call to dinner and when he was sent for it was too late and it was found that he had already had his dinner. Mohandas felt so much grieved about this that he imposed upon himself the punishment of not eating, for the rest of the season, mangoes, of which he was fond. And no one could persuade him that this self-imposed punishment was unnecessary.

He was hardly twelve years when the idea that untouchability is an unnatural thing began to dawn on him. A scavenger named Uka, an untouchable, used to come to clean the family latrines. Often Mohandas would ask his mother why it was wrong to touch Uka, why he (Mohandas) was forbidden to touch him. If he accidentally touched Uka, he was asked to perform the ablutions, and though he naturally obeyed, it was not without smilingly protesting that untouchability was not sanctioned by religion, that it was impossible that it should be so: "I was a very dutiful and obedient child and so far as it was consistent with respect for parents, I often had tussles with them on this matter. I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Uka as sinful."

Regarding his school days, Bapu has written as follows:

"I was not regarded as a dunce at the high school. I always enjoyed the affection of my teachers. Certificates of progress

and character used to be sent to the parents every year. I never had a bad certificate. In fact I even won prizes after I passed out of the second standard. In the fifth and sixth I obtained scholarships of for rupees four and ten respectively, an achievement for which I have to thank good luck more than my merit. For the scholarships were not open to all, but reserved for the best boys amongst those coming from the Sorath Division of Kathiawad. And in those days there could not have been many boys from Sorath in a class of forty to fifty.

My own recollection is that I had not any high regard for my ability. I used to be astonished whenever I won prizes and scholarships. But I very jealously guarded my character. The least little blemish drew tears from my eyes. When I merited, or seemed to the teacher to merit, a rebuke, it was unbearable for me. I remember having once received corporal punishment. I did not so much mind the punishment, as the fact that it was considered my desert. I wept piteously. That was when I was in the first or second standard.

There was another such incident during the time when I was in the seventh standard. Durabji Edulji Gimi was the headmaster then. He was popular among boys, as he was a disciplinarian, a man of method and a good teacher. He had made gymnastics and cricket compulsory for boys of the upper standards. I disliked both. I never took part in any exercise, cricket or football, before they were made compulsory. My shyness was one of the reasons for this aloofness, which I now see was wrong. I then had the false notion that gymnastics had nothing to do with education. Today I know that physical training should, have as much place in the curriculum as mental training.

I may mention, however, that I was none the worse for abstaining from exercise. That was because I had read in books about the benefits of long walks in the open air, and having liked the advice, I had formed a habit of taking walks, which has still remained with me. These walks gave me fairly hardy constitution.

The reason of my dislike for gymnastics was my keen desire

to serve as nurse to my father. As soon as the school closed, I would hurry home and begin serving him. Compulsory exercise came directly in the way of this service. I requested Mr. Gimi to exempt me from gymnastics so that I might be free to serve my father. But he would not listen to me.

Now it so happened that one Saturday, when we had school in the morning, I had to go from home to the school for gymnastics at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I had no watch, and the boys had all left. The next day Mr. Gimi, examining the roll, found me marked absent. Being asked the reason for absences, I told him what had happened. He refused to believe me and ordered me to pay a fine of one or two annas (I cannot now recall how much).

I was convicted of lying! That deeply pained me. How was I to prove my innocence? There was no way. I cried in deep anguish. I saw that a man of truth must also be a man of care. This was the first and last instance of my carelessness in school. I have a faint recollection that I finally succeeded in getting the fine remitted. The exemption from exercise was of course obtained, as my father wrote himself to the headmaster saying that he wanted me at home after school.

But though I was none the worse for having neglected exercise, I am still paying the penalty of another neglect. I do not know whence I got the notion that good handwriting was not a necessary part of education."

He Wouldn't Copy

When he was at the high school in the first year, an incident occurred at the time of examination which is worth recording. Mr. Giles, the Educational Inspector, had come on a visit of inspection. He had set them five words to write as a spelling exercise. One of the words was "Kettle".

Mohandas had misspelt it. The teacher tried to prompt him with the point of his boot, but he would not be prompted. It was beyond him to see that the teacher wanted him to copy the spelling from his neighbours's slate, for he thought that the teacher was there to supervise against copying.

The result was that all the boys, except him, were found to have spelt every word correctly. Only he had been stupid. The teacher tried later on to bring this stupidity home to him, but without effect. He could never learn that art of "copying".

Some further interesting sidelight on Bapu's activities during his school days is thrown by Shri Prabhudas Gandhi in his book of reminiscences. He says:

> When he (Mohandas) was a high school student he was very regular in his morning walks. In the evenings he would dig in the garden and tend the plants. He had a well-regulated and disciplined life and wasted no time. He was either engrossed in his books or worked in his garden. At the same time he was always ready to look after his father when his help was required.
>
> He was up at dawn and was soon in the garden near the town where other people would collect to have a bath near a well. Young boys would wash their clothes there, competing with one another to see who got them the cleanest. Mohan was almost always on top. After his bath he would now and then collect a few saplings from the garden to be planted in his own garden. He learnt a good deal about plants and flowers and was in a position to advise his friends and companions on the care of plants.
>
> If Mohandas did not like the other boys' rough handling of one another even in play, he would stand aloof and say, 'Carry on, but I cannot join you.' If anyone was unusually rough he would firmly intervene and tell him to behave.
>
> One gets some glimpses of Gandhiji's student life from the reminiscences of his fellow students. If the boys divided themselves into groups and developed a sense of jealous rivalry, he would try to bring them together. If the stronger boys bullied the weaker ones, Mohanbhai would side with the weak. While he kept away from group rivalries and wasted none of his time, he was a loyal friend and was prepared to face opposition to maintain that loyalty.

Through Purificatory Ordeals

Among Mohandas's friends at the high school there was one who, knowing his timidity of nature, which made him dread walking in the dark lest he should come across ghosts and such other evil spirits, thieves and serpents, gave him to understand that the one remedy against such shameful weakness was meat-eating, which would make him strong and brave in no time. This friend would tell Mohandas that he himself could hold in his hand live serpents, could defy thieves and did not believe in ghosts. And all this was, according to him, the result of eating meat.

Such insidious teaching had its effect on impressionable Mohandas. The belief began to take root in him that meat-eating was good, that it would make him strong and daring and that if the whole country took to meat-eating, "the English could be overcome". So, he took to eating meat surreptitiously with his friend, and when occasionally after such a feast he had no appetite left for his meal at home, he was obliged to resort to false excuses when his mother asked him why he did not wish to eat his meal.

This predicament naturally engendered feelings of shame in him and before long he said to himself: "Though it is essential to take up food 'reform' in the country, yet deceiving and lying to one's father and mother is worse than not eating meat. In their lifetime, therefore, meat-eating must be out of question. When they are no more and I have found my freedom, I will eat meat openly, but until that moment arrives, I will abstain from it." This decision he communicated to his friend, and since then he bade good-bye to meat for ever.

As years went slowly by, the conviction that morality is the basis of things and truth is the substance of all morality took deeper and deeper root in him and truth became his sole objective. "It began to grow in magnitude every day, and my definition of it also has been ever widening," says Bapu in his *Autobiography*.

Before the canker of untruth could be completely rooted out from his nature he had to pass through two more ordeals. A

relative and he had become fond of smoking, but as they had no money, they used to pick up stumps of cigarettes, thrown away by an uncle of his who had the habit of smoking. When the stumps were not available, they took to stealing coppers from the servant's pocket money in order to purchase cigarettes. But, after a time they became utterly disgusted with their life of deception and decided to commit suicide. However, suicide was found to be not so easy as they had imagined. Ultimately they were forced to decide on giving up for ever the habit of smoking stumps of cigarettes and of stealing servant's coppers for the purpose.

The other incident took place when he was fifteen. He stole a bit of gold out of his meat-eating brother's armlet. The brother had run into a debt of about rupees twenty-five. Mohandas thought of resorting to this device to get rid of his brother's debt. When he had done it and the debt had been cleared, he was overwhelmed by the thought of the enormity of his sinful deed. What followed has been movingly related by Bapu in his *Autobiography*. He writes:

> "I resolved never to steal again. I also made up my mind to confess it to my father. But I did not dare to speak. Not that I was afraid of my father beating me. No. I do not recall his ever having beaten any of us. I was afraid of the pain that I should cause to him. But I felt that the risk should be taken; that there could not be a cleansing without a clean confession.
>
> I decided at last to write out the confession, to submit it to my father, and ask his forgiveness. I wrote it on a slip of paper and handed it to him myself. In this note not only did I confess my guilt, but I asked adequate punishment for it, and closed with a request to him not to punish himself for my offence. I also pledged myself never to steal in future.
>
> I was trembling as I handed the confession to my father. He was then suffering from a fistula and was confined to bed. His bed was a plain wooden plank. I handed him the note and sat opposite the plank.

He read it through, and pearl-drops trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note. He had sat up to read it. He again lay down. I also cried. I could see my father's agony. If I were a painter I could draw a picture of the whole scene today. It is still so vivid in my mind.

Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. Only he who has experienced such love can know what it is. As the hymn says:

'Only he
Who is smitten with the arrows of love,
Knows its power.'

This was, for me, an object-lesson in Ahimsa. Then I could read in it nothing more than a father's love, but today I know that it was pure Ahimsa. When such Ahimsa becomes all-embracing, it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power.

This sort of sublime forgiveness was not natural to my father. I had thought that he would be angry, say harsh things, and strike his forehead. But he was so wonderfully peaceful, and I believe this was due to my clean confession. A clean confession, combined with a promise never to commit the sin again, when offered before one who has the right to receive it, is the purest type of repentance. I know that my confession made my father feel absolutely safe about me, and increased his affection for me beyond measure.

"The Mahatma"

Not many boys and girls and a good many adults too must be aware of the real significance of the word "Mahatma" which is invariably associated with Bapu's name. They know, of course, that "Maha" means "great" and "Atma" means "soul" and that the entire word "Mahatma" means "Great Soul". But this explanation does not carry us far enough. According to the

Mahabharata, the designation can apply to only that person whose thoughts, words and deeds completely tally with one another. A Mahatma will speak out as well as act exactly as he thinks—he will not shirk from the consequence even if his life is at stake.

How many of us, not merely boys and girls of tender age, but adults too, can say with perfect truth like Bapu: "I have in my life never been guilty of saying things I did not mean", or "To my knowledge, throughout my public and private career, I have never broken a promise"?

Bapu was not born a "Mahatma"—he was like any other child, anywhere on earth. His life proves that any child, boy or girl, can rise to the greatest heights a human being is capable of reaching, if only he or she shows the same zeal in the pursuit of Truth and tries not to swerve from the path of Truth even by an hair's breadth, as Bapu.

The supreme truths which have come to be identified with Bapu's life were learnt by him at his mother's knees in his childhood and boyhood days. Mr. H.S.L. Polak, who became an ardent co-worker of Bapu from the latter's earliest days in South Africa, and who had opportunities of sharing Bapu's thoughts and of watching his movements during the Satyagraha struggle in that land so intimately as few others had, has borne full testimony to this fact. In a statement made by him on his arrival in India in December 1921, Mr. Polak remarked that Bapu had learnt from is mother three things, viz., the doctrine of truth and search after that doctrine, love as the method to reach truth through love. He had seen Bapu working in South Africa during a long period of years and worked with him in very close association as a humble worker in the same cause. He had seen him constantly placing the ideal of truth before him, not merely to gaze at it, but to realize in his daily life.

Mr. Polak had seen him rejecting the easy way in favour of the more difficult one and walking that way by means of love and sacrifice. If people studied Bapu's career in South Africa, they would find that the first thing he always sought to do was to secure for the humblest of his countrymen the thing that

those who were opposed to him were willing to concede to himself. He refused to be considered as an exception, but wanted that every thing which he might be entitled to get, should be given even to the humblest of his countrymen. He was not a Hindu, but an Indian first. Therefore, he loved the Indians of all religious persuasions. He was not a caste-Hindu, and he loved all his fellow-countrymen, whether touchables or untouchables. It was in that way Bapu gained his reputation both in his private and public life. Bapu used no other method except the one of love, sacrifice and tolerance of human understandings.

Bapu's "Womanliness"

Many who came in intimate contact with Bapu in South Africa noticed that he was more womanly than most women they came across. Tribute to this unique trait in his character has been borne by both Mr. and Mrs. H.S.L. Polak his co-workers in that country.

Mr. Polak has remarked, "Gandhi has proved beyond dispute the theory that the best men and the best women combine in them the best qualities of each other. No woman could excel him in patience or endurance, none could be more long-suffering".

Mrs. Polak has said, "Mahatma Gandhi has been given the love of many women for his womanliness. I often see in imagination Mahatmaji as I frequently saw him in South Africa walking up and down a room with a young child in his arms, soothing it in the almost unconscious way a woman does, and at the same time, discussing with the utmost clearness, pressing political questions."

A glimpse of the deep motherly love which Bapu bestowed on children has been given also by Deenabandhu Andrews. The Deenabandhu says he, Bapu and others had been occupied all day at the store yard of Parsi Rustomji's shop in Durban. From morning till afternoon Bapu had been overwhelmed with the burden of a thousand cares. The whole compound had been full of Tamil women and children, who had come for help at the

climax of the Passive Resistance struggle. He had soothed them by his words; he had ministered to them with his hands; he had prepared food for them; he had taken their little babies one by one, and nursed them while light had shone from his eyes.

As the day went on the Deenabandhu wondered how the strain could be kept up. There was no time even to take food; and there was not a moment's rest. Then at last Bapu told the Deenabandhu to get ready to go to Phoenix by train from Durban station, which was close at hand. They reached Phoenix just as the sun began to decline. As it grew dark, they sat there in the moonlight together. There was an African Christian woman who lived in the same compound with them and helped Kasturba in household matters. Her face was worn, but it was lighted up with a smile as Bapu drew near.

Then Mr. Kallenbach came running up quickly, brimming over with fun, carrying a child in his arms. The mother of Mr. West was there and Bapu greeted her with reverent regard. But the tiny children laid their own claim on Bapu and he gave himself up to them with all his heart. A pale invalid Mahomedan boy claimed his attention most, and obtained the most love in return. All through the evening the little one sat upon his knee and Bapu would stoop tenderly to ask him whether he had pain. A Zulu girl came from the Mission who was loved by all. So the evening wore on.

In the silence of the evening Bapu sang a religious song and prayed to the divine Father to bless all mankind. When the Deenabandhu had retired after saying 'good night', his heart was very full and tears not of pain but of joy, came to his eyes. "There, in Africa," writes the Deenabandhu, "I had found Christ, whom I had sought in vain in the proud churches which refused to allow anyone except 'white' men and women to cross their threshold. I sat for a long time at the end of that day, and the Gospel scene came back to me so fresh with new meaning that I could almost picture Christ moving about in the Ashram, sitting with us at our evening meal and joining with us in our worship of the Father of all mankind."

Referring to the human side of Bapu, Mr. H.S.L. Polak,

while unveiling a portrait of the latter at Singarachari Hall, Triplicane, Madras, in December 1924, said: "I know an occasion when Mahatma Gandhi was the guest of my European friends in South Africa. This European friend and his wife had a little baby and that baby was very noisy at nights. Gandhiji had just then come out of prison, where he had a very anxious time, and he needed bodily rest. He knew, however, that his host and hostess had spent restless nights. The next day after his friends had gone to bed Gandhiji went to their room, took the child from the cot and having taken it to his room attended to its needs throughout the night."

Phoenix Boys' Lapse and its Sequel

In 1913 there occurred an incident in the Phoenix Settlement, situated between Johannesburg and Durban, where Bapu and his co-workers with their families had finally settled down to lead a simple life, which deeply moved Bapu, as it concerned a number of boys, including one his own, whom he was trying to bring up in ideal ways. The incident is narrated by Shri Prabhudas Gandhi. He writes:

"One of the students once found a shilling on his way to the station and I found a three-penny bit when we were on a walking trip. The boys after some deliberation decided that one of them should take a day off and go to Durban and buy some eatables with the money. One of our teachers was an accomplice in this surreptitious activity. A few days after this Gandhiji went away to Johannesburg.

Three or four days later the teacher—let us call her X—sent for me in the classroom. After making sure that nobody who was likely to tell tales was within hearing, she cautiously opened her table drawer and put a packet before me and another boy saying, 'Now quickly eat up your share of the eatables'.

I dared not, for I had been put on diet by Gandhiji and if I ate, I felt that even if Gandhiji did not find out himself, I would myself have to tell him about it. X, however, would not hear of my refusing. I, therefore, took my share of the eatables and gave

it to the other boy and contented myself with merely the smell of the onions. Only a few days had elapsed since the boys had divided themselves into two groups—one for and the other against our teacher X.

For a few days after Gandhiji's return to Phoenix everything continued as usual. Then one day suddenly the secret was out and investigations began. An atmosphere of apprehension overcame us. We talked in whispers.

Gandhiji spent some time with X, then with one boy and another, questioning them while walking from his house to the press and back. Then he called Devadas and began questioning him while we waited restlessly for the result. A little later we heard that Gandhiji was very angry and that he had slapped somebody.

I thought that Devadas had perhaps been slapped, but I wondered why that should be. After all, we were all equally at fault. Then one boy brought the correct news that Gandhiji had not slapped anyone other than himself. He had slapped himself five times. A boy hiding behind some trees had actually seen Gandhiji do it.

It was midday and everyone had gone for a bath. Investigations were, therefore, slowed down until the evening. After the evening prayers everyone looked towards Gandhiji expectantly. After a few minutes' silence Gandhiji spoke the following words softly.

'I had some food this afternoon but I did have my supper in the evening. Even the water I drank seemed to taste bitter. That a son should deceive his father to such an extent has been causing me deep hurt though I have remained calm. When I could stand it no longer I slapped myself rather than do that to someone else. That, I thought, should show you how much I have been suffering as a result of the incident. Deva has confessed to me his part in the matter and admits to having repented for it. He has also promised never to act in this manner again.

'But even now I cannot eat, for the boys are keeping the truth from me. The boys tell one story and X another and it is

difficult for me to say who is telling the truth. Until I can get at the truth my life is less than dust. Therefore unless I can know the truth, it is useless for me to live. After thinking over the matter I have come to the conclusion that I should not touch food and water. Until the boys themselves come to me with the truth I shall neither touch food nor water.'

Everyone was stunned and there was complete silence. Then Gandhiji spoke again:

'Everyone who pities me should not come to me with the request that I should eat. If I died in the search for truth, what better death could I have? You should celebrate such day when my body falls for the sake of truth. Therefore, nobody should try to come to me with requests but should rather request the boys and help me to find out the truth.'

The next evening, Gandhiji was again to leave for Johannesburg. I followed my father to Gandhiji's house. He was getting ready and with him were our teacher X and Ravjibhai.

My father asked Gandhiji, 'You must be feeling weak?'

'No, not in the least. The fast in fact begins today,' replied Gandhiji.

When it was time to leave, Gandhiji started on foot towards the station. He did not touch even a drop of water though he had to walk over two and a half miles in the hot sun. But when did Gandhiji ever think of his bodily comforts?

Discussion continued all the way. Everyone looked very anxious. One or two of the elders along with X walked ahead to talk with her. In this manner we reached the station. Gandhiji took my father, Ravjibhai and X aside to talk to them.

In the meanwhile the train arrived and Gandhiji boarded it. It was about to leave when my father requested Gandhiji that now that he had got at the truth of the matter, he should have a meal at Seth Rustomji's house before proceeding further.

'Truth is like food to me. I shall fast today and only eat tomorrow. But do write to me and also ask X to do the same,' replied Gandhiji.

Fortunately Gandhiji's fast did not last for more than a day. But it affected us deeply. That afternoon when we returned to the Settlement after seeing Gandhiji off at the Phoenix station we felt sad and disturbed that we should have hurt him so much. Realization of our weaknesses came upon us with even greater force in Gandhiji's absence.

In eight or ten days, however, he returned to Phoenix and, as usual with us, we went to receive him at the station. When he and Mr. Kallenbach alighted from the train, they both had a grave expression on their faces. Gandhiji was quiet. Almost immediately afterwards we all started to walk towards the Settlement. Walking at some distance behind the rest, Gandhiji was talking to Mr. Kallenbach and Y.

As soon as we reached home, X who was also looking unhappy, came to Gandhiji who began talking to her away from others. I understood that the consequences set in motion by untruth and thieving had not yet come to a close. After the evening prayers Gandhiji spoke thus:

'Perhaps many of you might be aware that from today I have undertaken a seven-day fast. The pledge I have taken this time is not as hard as it was the previous time. This time I have decided not to give up water along with everything else. Even today you will find in our country *sadhus* who can fast for forty days at a time.

'I do not wish anyone to think that I am undertaking this fast to punish those who have done wrong. I am doing it to strengthen myself. Anyone who takes upon himself the task of showing the right path to others must first himself strive for perfection. I have no such claims. Involved as I have been in worldly matters, I have had no opportunity to live away from the world and practice austerities in order to attain self-realization. It does not appear likely that such an opportunity will be possible in this country. In our own country things are different. Therefore, I should do whatever little I can, in the circumstances.

'Work, like breathing and eating, is no more than an every day routine. If a man wishes to fulfil his real destiny he must

strive for self-realization. Why should you be unhappy at this opportunity which enables me to practise austerities? If you are unhappy you will only be making my task more difficult.

'Ba, Ramadas, X, Y and others are all desirous of fasting with me for seven days. But I have forbidden them to do so. Mr. Kallenbach considers it his duty to join me in whatever I do. Besides him, I have only permitted Y to go on fast. Y can only be at peace now if he purifies himself through fasting and repentance. He will, I hope, be able to bear the seven-day fast, but if he dies in the process, it will not be a matter for regret. If someone dies while striving for self-purification what other time could be more opportune for the arrival of death?

'There is no need for Ba, Ramadas or anyone else to undergo a fast. But if they must do so, then, let them wait until my fast is over.

'Because I shall be on fast and will not be able to do my share of work in the fields, the kitchen and at cobbling, others will have to make up for me by doing more than they do now. All of you will have to take greater interest in the discharge of various duties than you do when I am there.

'There is one other point, I have in mind and it is meant especially for the boys. It is wrong to tease or run down those who have committed an error or done wrong. Being human we are all liable to err. If anyone of us falls we should all take it as a warning. If, on the other hand, we laugh at it, we might ourselves commit the same error. It is our duty to be understanding and kind towards one who has committed an error and is repentant.

'This is not the end of my fasting. As soon as my seven-day fast is over, I shall undertake a partial fast for four months when I shall eat only once a day. If these very people fall again, I shall undertake fourteen days' complete fast and one year's partial one meal-a-day fast. If I have to undergo a fast for the third time for the same reason, I shall undertake a complete fast for not less than twenty-one days'."

Bapu as Schoolmaster

At theTolstoy farm in the Transvaal, where Bapu was living

with his "Phoenix family", there were a number of boys and girls, Hindu, Musalman, Parsi and Christian, for the education of whom Bapu found it necessary to make some provision. It was not possible, and he did not think it necessary, to engage special teachers for them.

Bapu did not believe in the existing system of education, and he had a mind to find out by experience and experiment the true system. "Only this much I knew," he says in his *Autobiography*, "that, under ideal conditions, true education could be imparted only by the parents, and then there should be the minimum of outside help, that Tolstoy Farm was a family, in which I occupied the place of the father, and that I should so far as possible shoulder the responsibility for the training of the young."

He had always given the first place to the culture of the heart or the building of character, and as he felt confident that moral training could be given to all alike, no matter how different their ages and their upbringing, he decided to live amongst them all the twenty-four hours of the day as their father. He regarded character building as the proper foundation for their education and, if the foundation was firmly laid, he was sure that the children could learn all the other things themselves or with the assistance of friends.

Fully appreciating the necessity of a literary training in addition, Bapu started some classes with the help of Mr. Kallenbach and another. Nor did he underrate the building up of the body. This they got in the course of their daily routine. "For there were no servants on the Farm," says Bapu in his *Autobiography*, "and all the work, from cooking to scavenging, was done by the inmates. There were many fruit trees to be looked after, and enough gardening to be done as well. Mr. Kallenbach was fond of gardening and had gained some experience of this work in one of the Governmental model gardens. It was obligatory on all, young and old, who were not engaged in the kitchen, to give some time to gardening. The children had the lion's share of this work, which included digging pits, felling timber and lifting loads. This gave them ample exercise."

"They took delight in the work, and so they did not generally need any other exercise or games," continues Bapu. "Of course some of them, and sometimes all of them, malingered and shirked. Sometimes I connived at their pranks, but often I was strict with them. I dare say that they did not like the strictness, but I do not recollect their having resisted it. Whenever I was strict, I would, by argument, convince them that it was not right to play with one's work. The conviction would, however, be short-lived, the next moment they would again leave their work and go to play. All the same we got along, and at any rate they built up fine physiques. There was scarcely any illness on the Farm, though it must be said that good air and water and regular hours of food were not a little responsible for this."

They were given some vocational training too, in shoe-making, carpentry and cooking. On the Farm it was a rule that the youngsters should not be asked to do what the teachers did not do, and therefore, when the children were asked to do any work, there was always a teacher co-operating and actually working with them. Hence whatever the youngsters learnt, they learnt cheerfully.

Literary training, however, was a more difficult matter. "I had neither the resources nor the literary equipment necessary," explains Bapu, "and I had not the time I would have wished to devote to the subject. The physical work that I was doing used to leave me thoroughly exhausted at the end of the day, and I used to have the classes just when I was most in need of some rest. Instead, therefore, of my being fresh for the class, I could, with the greatest difficulty, keep myself awake."

Bapu had to devote the mornings to work on the Farm and domestic duties, so the school hours had to be kept after the midday meal. There was no other time suitable for the school. There were three periods at the most to literary training. Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Urdu were all taught, and tuition was given through the vernaculars of the boys. English was taught as well. It was also necessary to acquaint the Gujarati Hindu children with a little Sanskrit, and to teach all the children elementary history, geography and arithmetic.

"I had undertaken to teach Tamil and Urdu," says Bapu. "The little Tamil I knew was acquired during voyages and in jail. I had not gone beyond Pope's excellent handbook. My knowledge of the Urdu script was all that I had acquired on a single voyage, and my knowledge of the language was confined to the familiar Persian and Arabic words that I had learnt from contact with Musalman friends. Of Sanskrit I knew no more than I had learnt at the high school; even my Gujarati was no better than that which one acquires at the school. Such was the capital with which I had to carry on. In poverty of literary equipment my colleagues went one better than I."

However, Bapu's love for the languages, his confidence in his capacity as a teacher as also ignorance of his pupils, and more than that, their generosity, as he puts it, stood him in good stead. Of text-books, about which we hear so much, he never felt the want. He did not even remember having made much use of the books that were available. He did not find it at all necessary to load the boys with quantities of books. He always felt that the true text-book for the pupil was his teacher. He could hardly remember what his teachers taught him from books, but he always had a clear recollection of the things they taught him independently of books.

"Children take much more and with less labour through their ears than through their eyes," is Bapu's opinion. He goes on, "I do not remember having read any book from cover to cover with my boys. But I gave them, in my own language, all that I had digested from my reading of various books, and I dare say they are still carrying a recollection of it in their minds. It was laborious for them to remember what they learnt from books, but what I imparted to them by word of mouth, they could repeat with the greatest ease. Reading was a task for them, but listening to me was a pleasure, when I did not bore them by failure to make my subject interesting. And from the questions that my talks prompted them to put, I had a measure of their power of understanding."

Just as physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise, even so the training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit, according to Bapu. And

the exercise of the spirit entirely depended on the life and character of the teacher. The teacher had always to be mindful of his p's and q's, whether he was in the midst of his boys or not. It is possible for a teacher situated miles away to affect the spirit of the pupils by his way of living. It would be idle for anybody, if he himself were a liar, to teach the boys to tell the truth. A cowardly teacher would never succeed in making his boys valiant, and a stranger to self-restraint. He realized, therefore, that he should be an eternal object-lesson to the boys and girls living with him. "They thus became my teachers," Bapu thinks, "and I learnt I must be good and live straight, if only for their sakes."

Bapu says that the increasing discipline and restraint he imposed on himself at Tolstoy Farm was mostly due to those wards of his. One of them was wild, unruly, given to lying, and quarrelsome. On one occasion he broke out most violently. Bapu felt exasperated. He never punished the boys, but this time he was very angry. He tried to reason with him. But the boy was adamant and even tried to over-reach him. At last Bapu picked up a ruler lying at hand and delivered a blow on his arm. "I trembled as I struck him," he relates the experience. "I dare say he noticed it. This was an entirely novel experience for them all. The boy cried out and begged to be forgiven. He cried, not because the beating was painful to him; he could, if he had been so minded, have paid me back in the same coin, being a stoutly built youth of seventeen; but he realized my pain in being driven to this violent resource. Never again after this incident did he disobey me. But I still repent that violence. I am afraid I exhibited before him that day not the spirit, but the brute, in me."

Bapu was always opposed to corporal punishment. He could recollect only one occasion on which he physically punished one of his sons. "I have therefore never until this day been able to decide," admits Bapu, "whether I was right or wrong in using the ruler. Probably it was improper, for it was prompted by anger and a desire to punish. Had it been an expression only of my distress, I should have considered it justified. But the motive in this case was mixed. The incident set

me thinking and taught me a better method of correcting students. I do not know whether that method would have availed on the occasion in question. The youngster soon forgot the incident, and I do not think he ever showed great improvement. But the incident made me understand better the duty of a teacher towards his pupils."

Cases of misconduct on the part of the boys often occurred after this, but Bapu never resorted to corporal punishment. "Thus in my endeavour to impart spiritual training to the boys and girls under me," says Bapu, "I came to understand better and better the power of the spirit.

Bapu as a Strict Disciplinarian

If Bapu was an embodiment of love for all youngsters he was also a strict disciplinarian where discipline was called for. When in 1904 he decided to change the venue of his activities in South Africa from Tolstoy Farm to Phoenix, he shifted the entire body of workers on the farm, including the teachers and students, to Phoenix. On the night of his arrival, after the evening meal, he addressed them as follows:

> We have now arrived in Phoenix. This is not Tolstoy Farm and it will be necessary to adjust our behaviour somewhat. The freedom at the Farm to play and roam around must give way to strict discipline. Those who were weak of heart and body have returned to their parents or relations. Those who have come here with me have done so of their own accord knowingly. Here we have to live the hard life of prisoners. Those who cannot stand a prisoner's life are free even now to leave.
>
> Only those who have the courage to go to prison when necessary should stay. I do not want those who might weaken on such an occasion whether they are young people or grown-ups, to remain here. That can only be if we practise jail life here and live accordingly.
>
> Even if it is not necessary to go to prison and we go to India, then, too, we have to live a life of simplicity and hardships. In India even harder work awaits us. That is why

we must follow here rules without which we will not be considered fit to remain in Phoenix.

One of the elementary rules, for instance, will be that nobody will be allowed to pluck fruit and eat it whenever he desires. This will not only apply to garden fruits but even to wild fruits. No one must eat any fruit beyond what is served at the three meals, when he can have as much as he wishes. But eating anything else beyond that will be considered theft. The second rule is that everyone must respect and obey the elders.

I want you to prepare for this life of discipline and am, therefore, giving you one week's holiday. During this time you can do what you like, be lazy, or enjoy yourselves in any other way. But next Monday school will begin. So that you may not say that I give you only work and no play, I am giving you the opportunity to play and then we shall work with all our might.

The morning school hours for the boys of the Colony were from 9 to 11. For half an hour after that the boys had to dig in the fields. One of the boys gathered courage to suggest to Bapu that instead of making them dig in the fields during the middle of the day, he might let them put in half an hour's extra digging in the morning. Bapu's reply was as follows:

> I am not in the least prepared to change the time. You must get into the habit of working in the fields in the heat of the sun. Today you are studying here, but if the struggle starts and you have to go to jail, who will then let you rest in the shade? There you will have to work like brave workers in the hot, scorching sun. If you get tired and give up or loose courage there, it will be a grave insult to you and me. Why do you forget your elders who are working from morning till night? We must give them a hand. If all of you of the school work with them, you will lighten their burden and you will get into the habit of living a sturdy life.

2

Gandhi's Style of Functioning

The following interesting accounts of Bapu, is from the pen of one who had the privilege of being with Bapu ever since the writer was born and written when he was a young boy:

'Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven.' I have been fortunate in having the chance of living with Bapuji more or less ever since I was born. I am sure all children would like to know something about him. I shall, therefore, try to relate to you some instances which I for one, will never forget.

When I was about three-four years old a friend of mine and I used to quarrel every evening as to which of us should sit on Gandhiji's lap during the evening prayers. Bapuji would solve the difficulty by taking both of us on his lap.

Bapuji wanted us all to be healthy, so physical exercises had to be performed daily. We had to get up very early in the morning for this purpose. Bapuji knew how to swim, and was anxious for us all too to learn swimming. Sometimes he used to accompany the swimmers into the Sabarmati river.

We used to go with him for a walk every evening and he always played with us while we walked. Sometimes when he had to have private talks with others, we were asked to walk behind. On such occasions I preferred to go back and play with my friends in the Ashram.

Bapuji was often away from the Ashram, touring all over India. But he never forgot us and used to write to us every week, addressing us as 'Dear Birds'. He often scolded us for our bad handwriting.

Once when he was in Yeravda Jail, I wrote and asked him as to why he wrote us such short letters when we wrote him long ones. 'Krishna,' I wrote, 'gave Arjuna very long answers, when Arjuna asked Him short questions. Why not you do the same?'

Bapuji gave me a fitting reply: 'Well,' he said, 'Krishna had only one Arjuna to answer, while I have many. And if I begin writing long letters to everybody, I shall have no time left to do any other work.' This satisfied me, and I never expected a long letter from him again.

We were taught in a manner quite different from most children. We spun for a much longer time than we studied books. But we learnt a lot while spinning. There must be many people who have taken to Khadi after having used Swadeshi mill cloth, but those of us who have been with Bapuji since childhood, have never known anything except Khadi, which for us is the truest Swadeshi.

We all know that Bapuji did not like to use foreign things. A friend of my father once sent me some toys which were not Swadeshi. Bapuji came to know of it. He took away the toys from us, and would not let us play with them. At that time I was very much annoyed, but afterwards I understood his point of view.

I had gone a with Gandhiji to Bardoli when he went there during the Truce of 1931. I was then seven, and had just learnt how to spin on the Yeravda Charkha. For a week I spun one thousand rounds daily. Bapuji was so pleased that he promised to take me with him when he next went to Bombay.

One of our teachers used to beat us. One rainy day I was sitting near a pond and was trying to save some of the ants which were nearly drowning in it. I should have been at my spinning wheel at that time, but I was so interested in the ants that I forgot to go there.

My teacher came rushing to me and caught hold of my ear,

and dragged me to the classroom. Then I wrote a letter to Bapuji complaining about the teacher's conduct. It seems Bapuji wrote something to the teacher because I was never beaten any more, and my friends too were somewhat spared.

I was with Bapuji on both the occasions when he fasted in Poona. On the seventh day of his Yeravda fast, poet Rabindranath had come to see him. This was the very first time that I saw Gurudeva (Tagore). He sang a Bengali song, after which we all sang Bapu's favourite hymn—*'Vaishnavajana to tene kahiye'*. Bapuji then broke his fast.

During his second fast he was shifted to Parna Kuti. At that time I was not anxious about Bapu's health and spent most of the time playing in the garden. During my stay there, I was stricken by a severe attack of malaria.

Seeing this, Bapu called my father near his bed, and asked him to wire my mother for coming away. It was only then that I realized how much he cared for everybody even when he was very ill himself.

Now we have lost Bapuji physically. I am sure, however, that he is watching us, and knows that everyone of us is occupied rightly. His words and guidance can never fail us. I have often felt his presence by my side, specially at the time of my prayers. May we continue to act according to his teachings!"

"Uncle Gandhi"

While in London at the time of his visit to England in 1931 in connection with the Second Round Table Conference Bapu stayed with Miss Muriel Lester as her guest in Kingsley Hall in the East End of the city. Attached to Kingsley Hall was a Children's House, between the little inmates of which and Bapu bonds of great affection were soon established. He was "Uncle Gandhi" to one and all of them—the name having been first given to him by a tiny tot of three and then caught on.

In his account of Bapu's visit to England Shri Mahadev Desai gives specimens of essays written by some of the children on Bapu's birthday. Here is one by a girl of less than ten years:

"St. Francis of Assisi was called the little poor man of Assisi.

He was just like Gandhi in every way.

They both loved nature, such as the children, birds and flowers. Gandhi wears loin-clothes like St. Francis did when he was on earth.

Gandhi and St. Francis were sons of rich merchants. One night while St. Francis was feasting with his followers, he thought of the poor Italians. He ran out and gave up his rich clothes and his money to the poor and dressed himself in old sacks, just like Gandhi.

St. Francis of Assisi took some of his followers. They made huts of trees. Gandhi the very same thing. He gave up all his rich gay life to the poor Indian people.

Gandhi's people gave him his loin-clothes to come to London. As he told us children who go to Kingsley Hall that he was not rich enough to buy them.

On Monday he has a day's silence for that is their religion. Gandhi for his birthday presents had wooden toys, candles and sweets. He lives on goat's milk, nuts and also fruit.''

Here is another by a boy of ten, reproduced as it was written:

"Mr. Gandhi is a Indian who was educated as a law student in London in 1890. He gave up this to help his country get better conditions.

He has come to England for the Indian Round Table Conference to try and get back the trade for India. He has been trying to get the 'Brahmins' to let the 'Untouchables' come into their temples.

They are about 6,000,000 people who do not know what a good meal is. He has given up all his belongings and is trying to be one of the poorest Indians. That is why he wears loin-cloth.

His food is goat's milk, fruit, and vegetables. He does not eat meat or fish because he does not believe taken life. Gandhi is a Christian Indian.

Mr. Gandhi spins his own cotton. He does an hour's spinning every day in England and even when he was in

hospital. He has just come back from Lancashire visiting the cotton mills.

He prays from Sunday 7 p.m. till Monday 7 p.m. and if you speak to him he does not answer you. When he came visiting, he came to my house and my mother was ironing, but he said, "Don't stop for I have had to do that myself."

I have shaken hands with him. The Indian word for 'Hullo' or 'Goodbye' is *'Namaskar'*.

W.A.I. Saville, 21 Eagling Road, Bow, London, E. 3, 30-9-'31."

With Madame Montessori

The following account of Bapu's first visit to Madame Maria Montessori, the originator of the world-famous Montessori system of children's education, is from the pen of the late Shri Mahadev Desai, Bapu's private secretary, who had accompanied Bapu during his visit to England and Europe towards the end of 1931:

Madame Montessori's meeting with Gandhiji was the meeting of a soul with a soul. She was so deeply touched that she wrote: "Gandhi appears to me as a soul rather than a man. He had been in my thoughts for years and years. I have followed him with my soul. His gentleness, his sweetness was such, that it was as if in the whole world there existed no such thing as harshness; he gave himself freely and fully, as if no limits or obstacles existed; strong direct as a ray of sunshine."

"It seemed to me," she added "that this venerable being might greatly aid the teachers whom I am preparing. The teacher should be open-hearted and generous, should change his own soul that he may come forth from the harsh world of the adults, that world full of obstacles thwarting the life of humanity. May his meeting with our teachers aid us in the spiritual defence of the child in humanity."

Gadis and pillows were provided for us to sit on and the children—from the poor borough of Islington—all like little angels, clean and sweet, and simply dressed, with bare legs and feet, gave Gandhiji a right Indian greeting—*Namaskar*. And then

the little ones treated us to what they had been taught—rhythmic movement, little acts of concentration and will power, instrumental music and last, but not least, an exercise in silence. It impressed all those present greatly.

In Madame Montessori, surrounded by her children, one had a vision of the world set free for the children—children, the only creation of the Maker most akin to Himself. Even if Madame Montessori's educational ambition may not bear full fruit, she will have rendered a unique service to humanity by turning the attention of parents and teachers to the adorable in the child. In sweet musical Italian she gave Gandhiji a brief welcome, which her secretary translated into English. And even the translation thrills one through and through:

> "I address myself to the pupils of my course and also to the friends here. I have a great thing to say to you—the Soul of Gandhi—the great Soul of which we are so conscious is here with us, incarnate in his bodily form. The voice which we shall soon have the privilege of hearing is that voice which sounds throughout the world. He speaks with love, and not merely with his voice does he speak but with his whole life. Such a rare thing is this, that when it happens, every ear listens.
>
> Noble Master! I am proud, that the voice which is privileged to give you welcome here, should be the voice of one of the Latin races—a voice from Rome, the great city Rome, cradle of the religious thoughts of the West. I wish that I could here present incarnate all the life and thought of the West to do honour to the East. I present you here my students. There are not only my students, but there are friends and the friends of their friends, and their relations gathered here together.
>
> But among my students there are people of many many nations. Here met together are the generous-hearted English teachers and many students from India—Italian students, Dutch, German, Danes, Swedes, Czechoslovakians, Austrians, Hungarians, Americans, Australians, students from New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and from Ireland.

They are all here out of love for the child.

The world civilization and thought of the child, this is what links us and brings us together in your presence, O Master! For we teach children to live, to live that spiritual life upon which alone can be built up the peace of the world. That is why the students are gathered together here to hear the voice of a Master in the art of life and for all of us—students and their friends, this will be a memorable day in our lives. These twenty-four little English children, who have prepared themselves and worked for you, are living symbols of the new child that is to be. We all await from you the word.

This had the tremendous effect of smiting all the cords of Gandhiji's heart which, trembling produced a music worthy of the great occasion. It was at once a message and a charter for the parents and children in all parts of the world. I reproduce it here in full.

Madame, you have overwhelmed me with your words. It is perfectly true, I must admit it in all humility, that however indifferently it may be, I endeavour to represent love in every fibre of my Maker Who to me embodies Truth, and in the early part of my career I discovered that if I was to realize Truth I must obey, even at the cost of my life, the law of Love. And having been blessed with children, I discovered that the law of Love could be best understood and learned through little children.

Were it not for us, their ignorant poor parents, our children would be perfectly innocent. I believe implicitly that the child is not born mischievous in the bad sense of the term. If parents would behave themselves whilst the child is growing, before it is born and after, it is a well-known fact that the child would instinctively obey the law of Truth and the law of Love. And when I understood this lesson in the early part of my life, I began a gradual but distinct change in life.

I do not propose to describe to you the several phases through which this stormy life of mine has passed, but I can only, in truth and in perfect humility, bear witness to the fact that to the extent that I have represented Love in my life, in thought, word, and deed I have realized the 'Peace that passeth understanding'. I have baffled many of my friends when they have noticed in me peace that they have envied, and they have asked me for the cause of that priceless possession. I have not been able to explain the cause save by saying that if my friends found that peace in me, it was due to my attempt to obey this, the greatest law of our being.

It was in 1915 when I reached India, that I first became acquainted with your activities. It was in a place called Amreli that I found that there was a little school being conducted after the Montessori system. Your name had preceded that first acquaintance. I found no difficulty in finding out at once that this school was not carrying out the spirit of your teaching; the letter was there whilst there was an honest more or less honest—effort being made, I saw too that there was a great deal of tinsel about it.

I came in touch, then, with more such schools, and the more I came in touch, the more I began to understand that the foundation was good and splendid, if the children could be taught through the laws of nature—nature, consistent with human dignity, not nature that governs the beast. I felt instinctively from the way in which the children were being taught that whilst they were being indifferently taught, the original teaching was conceived in obedience to this fundamental law. Since then, I have had the pleasure of coming across several of your pupils, one of whom had even made a pilgrimage to Italy and had received your personal blessings.

I was looking forward to meeting the children here and you all and it was a great pleasure to me to see these children. I had taken care to learn something about these little children. I had a foretaste of what I saw here, in

Birmingham, where there is a school between which and this there is a difference. But I also saw that there also human nature was struggling to express itself. I see the same thing here and it was a matter of inexpressible joy to me that from their childhood the children were brought to understand the virtue of silence, and how in response to the whisper from their teacher the children came forward one after another in that pin-drop silence.

It gave me great joy to see all those beautiful rhythmic movements and, as I was watching those movements of the children, my whole heart went out to the millions of the children of the semi-starved villages of India, and I asked myself as my heart went out to those children, 'Is it possible for me to give them those lessons and the training that are being given under your system, to those children?' We are conducting an experiment amongst the poorest of the children in India. I do not know how far the experiment will go. We have the problem of giving real vital education to these children of India's hovels, and we have no material means.

We have to fall back upon the voluntary assistance of teachers, but when I look for teachers, they are very few, especially, teachers of the type wanted, in order to draw the best from the children through understanding, through studying their individuality and then putting the child on its own resources, as it were, on its own honour. And believe me, from my experience of hundreds—I was going to say thousands—of children, I know that they have perhaps a finer sense of honour than you or I have. The greatest lessons of life, if we would but stoop and humble ourselves, we would learn not from grown-up learned men, but from the so-called ignorant children. Jesus never uttered a loftier or a grander truth than when he said that 'wisdom cometh out of the mouth of babes'. I believe it. I have noticed it in my own experience that if we would approach babes in humility and innocence, we would learn wisdom from them.

I must not take up your time. I have simply given you what is, at the present moment, agitating me; namely, the delicate problem considered in human terms of drawing out the best from these millions of children of whom I have told you. But I have learned this one lesson—that what is impossible with man is child's play with God and if we have faith in that Divinity which presides on the destiny of the meanest of His creation, I have no doubt that all things are possible and in that final hope, I live and pass my time and endeavour to obey His will. Therefore, I repeat that even as you, out of your love for children, are endeavouring to teach those children, through your numerous institutions, the best that can be brought out of them, even so, I hope that it will be possible not only for the children of the wealthy and the well-to-do, but for the children of the paupers to receive training of this nature.

You have very truly remarked that if we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children; and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won't have to struggle, we won't have to pass fruitless, idle resolutions, but we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with that peace and love for which, consciously, the whole world is hungering.

Bapu—The Idol of Love

Balkan-ji-Bari (literally "Children's Own Garden") has been celebrating the birthday of Bapu on 2nd October as the National Children's Day in India ever since 1923. With the efforts of this Child Welfare Association of India, the United Nations Organization has directed that the same day be celebrated as the International Children's Day, and almost all countries of the world have been making this day a Day of Happiness for the Children. For, Bapu was not only the Father of our Nation, but he was also and remains to be the idol of love for the whole of the world.

Once upon a time a lady came to see Bapu together with her five-year-old child. The lady was a Christian missionary, and for a considerable time she went on discussing with Bapu about the teachings of Christ. The little girl felt bored listening to the talks of these two big persons, and she left them to go and play nearby . . . . All of a sudden Bapuji noticed some kind of distraction in the lady's eyes, for, a little farther her daughter was seen playing with a poisonous snake.

Sometimes the child would throw away the snake, and sometimes while doing so, she would have a fall. All the same, she was just laughing and seemed to be enjoying the game. The mother began to get wild with fear, but Bapu consoled her: "Why are you afraid? The child does not fear and has no hatred. The snake too seems to be appreciating her innocence. Both are playing like friends. When they get tired, they are bound to leave each other by themselves." And actually it happened like that.

Shortly after his release from internment in Aga Khan Palace, Bapu, accompanied by his youngest son, Devadas, and his family, Shri Pyarelal, Dr. Sushila Nayar, Shri Narahari Parikh, and a few other co-workers, proceeded to Mahabaleshwar for a short stay. One day Devadas's son, a schoolboy, finding difficulty in solving the arithmetical problems, set to him by his teacher, had sought the help of these associates of Bapu one by one, but they, telling him they were "very busy"—which they actually were—sent him from pillar to post.

In desperation the youngster ran to Bapu, and complaining that none were listening to his entreaties for help, pleaded with his grandpa that he at least should help him to solve the problems. Bapu too at that time was busy writing his articles for the next issue of *Harijan* and was pressed for time. But nothing could be more pressing in his eyes than the requirements and happiness of children, and he instantly set aside his papers, made the boy sit near him and for the next half an hour he was absorbed in showing to the boy how to solve the problems which had been vexing his mind.

When all the problems had been solved to the entire satisfaction of the boy and he was about to romp away in delight, Bapu enhanced that delight tenfold by telling him that in future, whenever he had any difficulty, he should come straight to Bapu alone and not go to any others.

Clara Quien, a well-known European sculptress, had come to Sevagram to model a bust of Bapu from which she intended to prepare a statue for presentation to the All-India Village Industries Association. She had brought her baby Rhea, with her and had been accommodated in one of the huts on the Ashram grounds. One evening, when Bapu returned from his walks he happened to pass by the hut and was delighted to see the little child.

"What a lovely baby you have! Now you should model her, not me," said Bapu.

"I did when she was seven weeks old," remarked the sculptress.

"How many children have you?" asked Bapu.

"Three, one of nine, one of five and this one three," replied the sculptress.

"Then why do you make models if you have such lively children? They are love statues. Better share your clay with the people here to wash themselves with it."

Before she could think of a rejoinder to this remark of Bapu he had continued his walk. "I would have liked to ask him," said the sculptress later, " 'you have children too, why do you spin?' "

3

Gandhi and Children

"Children are My Life"

One day a small girl of the Sevagram Ashram found a rupee lying on the ground. She picked it up and ran to Bapu to hand it over to him, but as he was resting in his hut, Amtulbahen prevented her from doing so, lest Bapu's sleep be disturbed. Bapu, overhearing this, said, "Amtul, let her come. Children are my life." He then praised the girl and sent her to the manager of the Ashram for crediting the rupee to the Harijan Fund.

In spite of his preoccupations Bapu always found some time to mingle with children. When after a brief stay at the Sabarmati Ashram he was called to Calcutta on his political work, he bade the Ashramites good-bye, and his parting advice echoed his regrets that he could not be so free with the Ashram children as he had liked to be. He said.

"In the end whilst I always shall recall this period of my stay in your midst with joy and satisfaction, my feeling is not free from a regret, and that is, that in spite of my being in your midst for all these days I have not been able to play with the children of the Ashram, to know them individually by their names, to win their personal friendship and confidence as I would have liked to do. But what could I do? I was so hard pressed for work!"

Here is another story illustrative of his unique love for children:

On one occasion, according to a writer in *Pushpa,* the monthly journal of the Balkan-ji-Bari, Bapu while out on a morning walk at Sevagram, was accompanied by a mother with two little children, one of whom was in her arms while the other was trailing behind her. Suddenly the little one, in the arms, cried and the mother tried to pacify it but she failed.

Bapu noticing this, handed over his long staff (which he carried with him on his walk) to the writer, took the babe in his own arms, touched its cheeks gently and smiled with beaming eyes. And, lo! the dear wee one became silent, nay, responded with an equally radiant smile. The mother wondered at Bapu's skill in motherliness.

Then the other child, trailing behind the mother, ran away from her side and catching hold of Bapu's right-hand, led him to a flower and said: "Bapu, how beautiful is the flower!"

"Very beautiful, indeed," replied Bapuji smilingly.

Just then a dog passed by. The child pointing to its tail, observed, "Bapu, Bapu, the dog has a tail."

"Is that so?" answered back Bapuji with the innocence of a child. And then, after a moment's pause he asked, "But have you a tail too?"

The child laughed and remarked, "You are so old and big. And yet you do not know that man has no tail. You are indeed an ignoramus."

And Bapu and all of them joined heartily in the loud laughter.

"The truth is," adds the writer, "that when he is among children Bapu becomes like one of them. He forgets his seventy and odd years as well as his self-imposed burden of sacrificial work for the welfare of India and the world."

"And every time I have seen him among children," he continues, "I have pictured to myself the scene in Palestine, which was enacted whenever Christ passed through its streets and the children gathered round his knees and looked into his love-filled eyes."

Happy Moments with Children

At the opening ceremony of Saraswati Bhavan, a girls' hostel run by the Ahmedabad Municipality, in October, 1936, Bapu had a refreshing playful talk with the children. The girls of the institution gathered in the afternoon to give him their yarn spun on the occasion of his birthday. They gave 1,22,475 yards of yarn but, what is more, sixty of them took pledges to spin 1,00,000 yards during the year for their own clothing needs.

After the presentation was done he felt like saying a few words to the young people gathered there, but it took the form of a dialogue which enlivened the whole atmosphere.

'You know that Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj has opened your hostel today. You must try to be worthy of that good man. You perhaps know that he is a good man?'

'Oh, yes.'

'Not "Oh, yes" but "Yes, please".'

'Yes, please,' they shouted in a chorus.

'But if he is a good man, what about the rest?'

'Everyone is good.'

'Not including you?'

'We are good too.'

'All without exception? Are you sure?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well then, tell me if any of you tell lies.'

'We do,' said some of them.

'Always or on occasions?'

'On certain occasions.'

'And don't you quarrel?'

'We do.'

'Always?'

'Yes,' which was drowned in hearty laughter.

'Well, but I must say that you are good, because you are ready to confess that you sometimes tell lies and quarrel amongst yourselves. And the rest of us are also good only in

that sense and no other. But what about those who go about saying that everyone must tell the truth and themselves never do so?'

'They are hypocrites.'

'That's perfect. Let us never be hypocrites. Now, one more question. You have taken a pledge to spin 1,00,000 yards during the year. What if you break the pledge?'

'No fear,' they emphatically protested.

'But if you do?'

'We know we will not,' they rejoined with even greater emphasis.

'But supposing you do?'

(One voice) 'Fasting!'

'Who is to fast? I or you?'

'We of course.'

'Fasting on milk and fruit?'

'No, sir. We shall take only water.'

'But how many days will you fast?'

'So long as we do not finish our promised quota.'

'Splendid. But know that there are reporters here who will publish this talk of ours and you will have to rue it if you fail.'

Then came the turn of Vallabh Vidyalaya boys—boys of the Dharala community who are taught and given their board and lodging free. The institution is named after Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

The teacher presented to Gandhiji cloth woven out of the yarn spun from slivers carded from the cotton purchased out of the wages they had earned from carding. The teacher said that the boys did cleaning and sweeping of the streets as well.

'Every day?'

'No, we did so on Gandhiji's birthday.'

'Well, I tell you, if you do it every day you will make Bochasan a model village from the standpoint of sanitation and you may some day be Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Even if you fail to be Sardar Vallabhbhai you will have done something good.

But you may take it from me that if you do not do this street cleaning, you will never be Sardar Vallabhbhai.'

'But,' said one of the boys, 'ours is a bad village. It does not deserve these heroic measures. We may clean the streets, but the inhabitants will go on spoiling them.'

'Now, now, don't say so. All villages are like that, and it is our duty to persevere the more, the more they persist in defiling the streets. And you must not forget that you belong to the village.'

Some Anecdotes of Bapu

His Fatherly Advice

"What would be your fatherly advice to a young man about to launch into the world?" asked an English journalist of Bapu once.

Bapu's reply was: "To hold his tongue," and he added, "was it not Shakespeare who said. 'Lend everybody thine ear, thy voice to none?"

Father and Son

When Bapu was in Yeravda Jail, his youngest son, Devadas, could not brook the idea of Bapu standing in the Superintendent's Office when he had come to interview his father. The proud and sensitive boy burst out into loud crying when he was brought in and it was with difficulty that Bapu could restrain him.

Bapu's mind, however, would not take this as any lack of courtesy on the part of the British. He was satisfied that "He was a prisoner and as such, had no right to sit in the presence of the Superintendent." 'Dignity, I am sure, consists in my standing,' he wrote later.

"Liars All"

In the course of his Bengal tour in 1925, Bapu happened to visit Nawabganj. It had rained heavily all night, and the school boys (of Haripad Bapu's National School), whom Bapu wanted

to meet early morning before leaving, could not keep their time and were late. Not more than five minutes could, therefore, be given them.

"You all spin and wear Khaddar," said Bapu to them, "but tell me how many of you always speak the truth and never lie?" A few boys raised their hands. "Well, now tell me how many of you occasionally happen to lie?" Two boys immediately raised their hands, then four and finally, almost all!

"Thank you," said Bapu, bidding them good-bye, "there will be always hope for those of you who know and own that they occasionally lie. The path of those who think they never lie is difficult. I wish both success.

"Nothing too Small for Him"

Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar, who was with Bapu in Bombay at the time of the Congress Session there in 1915 relates the following story revealing how great the latter could be even in small things:

One day I noticed him searching furiously for something in an agitated mood.

I asked him, "Bapu, what are you searching for?"

"A small pencil," he answered.

I took one out of my attache case to give him.

"No, no. I want the small pencil I am searching for," Bapuji said.

"Use this for the moment, Bapuji, and I shall search for yours later," I replied.

"You do not understand, Kaka," he said, "I should not lose that pencil. It was given to me in Madras by the young son of G.A. Natesan. And with what affection he ran and gave it to me—how can I afford to lose it?"

We both searched the rogue of a pencil and Bapuji felt at ease only after it was found.

The pencil was hardly one inch long

Vegetarianism and Children

In a private letter, published in *The Vegetarian,* London,

dated May 5, 1894, Bapu wrote as follows:

Recently a grand convention of Keswick Christians was held in Wellington, under the presidency of Rev. Andrew Murray. I attended it in the company of some dear Christians; they have a boy six or seven years old. He came out with me for a walk one day during the time. I was simply talking to him about kindness to animals. During the talk we discussed Vegetarianism.

Ever since that time, I am told, the boy has not taken meat. He did watch me, before the above conversation, taking only vegetables at the dinner table, and questioned me why I would not take meat. His parents, though not themselves vegetarians, are believers in the virtue of Vegetarianism, and did not mind my talking to their boy about it.

I write this to show how easily one can convince children of the grand truth, and induce them to avoid meat if their parents are not against the change. The boy and I are thick friends now. He seems to like me very much.

Another boy, about fifteen years, I was talking to, said he could not himself kill or see a fowl killed, but did not object to eating it.

A Sermon on Trifles

In December 1945 Bapu paid an unexpected visit to the dormitory attached to the school in the Nai Talim Shala of Shri Aryanayakam in the Sevagram Ashram. According to Shri Pyarelal, Bapu, summing up his impressions of his visit, wrote in a note which he addressed to the school authorities before he left Sevagram, that what he saw that morning made his sight ache.

He expressed that in front of the room which was used for the children's dispensary he found the ground all wet. On inquiry he found that the children washed their hands and faces there. In the dormitory where the children slept the mats were untidily kept. A pen and inkstand had been left lying on a mat in the middle of the room. He examined the ink-pots and the pens. They were messy.

He added that he opened one of the beddings, and saw that the bed clothes were unwashed. The bed-sheet was torn in many places and an indifferent attempt at mending had been made only at a few. The stuffing in the mattress had become lumpy and hard from long use. Under the mattress was a heap of unwashed rags. Bamboo screens had been put up in the verandah to provide extra accommodation for more students.

He had intended to give not more than five minutes to the visit. He actually spent three-quarters of an hour in inspecting and explaining things to the superintendent of the hostel, he said:

"There should have been a receptacle to collect the water from the ablutions at the foot of the tree. Otherwise much precious water is wasted. Besides it breeds mosquitoes. The torn bed-sheet should have been patched up or doubled and turned into a quilt. I did much blanket quilting while I was in prison in the Transvaal. Such blankets are warm and lasting. Torn rags should not be treated as waste. They should be properly washed and kept. They can be used for mending clothes and in a variety of other ways.

Some boys, I found, had not sufficient winter clothing. Why should not those who have more than their requirements be taught to part with their superfluous clothing for those who were insufficiently provided? That would be fine object-lesson in mutual aid.

And why bamboo screens in the verandah? A verandah is meant to let in air and sunshine. The screens shut both out. I was told this was done to improvise accommodation for more students, but then why admit more students than there is accommodation for?

All these may appear to be trifles, but all things are made up of trifles. My entire life has been built on trifles. To the extent that we have neglected to inculcate attention to details on our boys we have failed. Rather I should say, I have failed. For it was I who launched the experiment of Nai Talim but could not find time to conduct it myself and had to leave it to others.

A sense of cleanliness, tidiness and sanitation, in my

opinion, constitutes the very core Nai Talim. To cultivate it involves no expense. All it needs is a keen, observant eye and an artistic sense. If you tell me that in this way you cannot do justice to more than one or two boys, I will say, then have one or two and no more. By undertaking more than we can properly manage we introduce into our soul the taint of untruth."

Bapu's Little Heroines

During his 'begging tours' in the cause of Harijan uplift, Gandhiji used to ask even little girls, who came to garland him or to make presents to him, to part with the jewellery they had on their person. He wanted the little ones not only to learn to do without costly and wasteful aids to beauty but also to pass through the crucible of self-sacrifice so that they might turn out in later life to be real heroines of whom their country might be proud.

Thus, at Bhopal when a girl came to put flowers into his hands he asked her, "Why don't you present your ring to the Harijan Fund?" Saying that she would give the ring to him, the girl tried to remove it from her finger. Gandhiji then told her that her parents might question her if she parted with the ring, but the girl persisted in her decision to present it to him.

Bapu still pressed her to keep the ring to herself, but this caused her so great disappointment that Gandhiji felt the necessity of accepting the present. The ring, however, could not be removed from the finger easily and water had to be fetched and applied to the finger before it could be taken off. The girl was extremely pleased when at last the ring was removed and she was able make a gift of it to Gandhiji.

At Vizag a small girl came to put a garland of hand-spun yarn round Bapu's neck. He took the opportunity to catch hold of her hand and ask for the bangles she was wearing. When she looked in the direction of her father for permission, the latter gladly gave it and she too was happy to make the sacrifice. Her example was followed by another little girl of eight who came up to him and holding out her hand asked him to remove her bangle too.

"More Beautiful than all Ornaments"

While touring Southern India in connection with the anti-untouchability movement, an incident took place at Badagara in Malabar which visibly moved Gandhiji. In response to his appeal at the public meeting there, a girl named Kaumudi came forward and gave up her bangles. Although Gandhiji was satisfied with it the girl was not. She then took out her gold chain from her neck and gave it to him. Gandhiji thought that the presentation would end there. But the girl was not to be stopped. Her hands almost unconsciously travelled to her ears and a pair of beautiful jewelled ear-rings were passed on to him.

This incident, said Bapu later, touched his heart and gave him fresh inspiration. He had tried to conceal his emotion, but he could not say how far he succeeded. Gandhiji asked if the girl had her parents' consent for this presentation. Her father was only pleased. All the girl asked in return for the ornaments was an autograph, but Gandhiji was prepared to give her much more than that. He wrote on a piece of paper in Hindi a sentence to the effect that more beautiful than all ornaments she had given up was her willingness for sacrifice, and signed under it. The girl was very much pleased and she promised not to replace the ornaments

The Practical Lesson

In the Aga Khan Place at Poona, during Bapuji's incarceration, beside other things, he took care of Manubahen's studies. He taught her by turns—History, Geography, Gujarati, Sanskrit and Grammar, etc.

Manubahen had given her old Geography text-book to Bapu. He studied it for teaching her, and having gone through its first chapter, he gave some questions to her for writing their answers.

There is a special kind of note-book for Geography, which Manubahen had not got. So she requested the Jail Superintendent to procure one from the city. The note-book was brought for a rupee and a half.

Manubahen was pleased with the note-book, and she gladly

took it to Bapuji for showing it to him. Bapu became a little serious, and the first question he asked her was: "How much did the note-book cost?"

Manubahen replied that she did not know its price. Bapu then asked her to enquire about it and let him know. Mr. Katteli, the Jail Superintendent, was aware of Bapu's nature, so he told her that it was not necessary to give that information to Bapu. But when he was told that Bapu himself had made the enquiry, he immediately gave her the cash memo.

Seeing that cash memo for rupee one a half, Bapu told Manubahen: "Probably you thought that because we had not to pay from our pocket, and the Government had to spend for it, an expensive note-book like that was worthwhile. . . ."

"However," he explained to her, "You are making a blunder. Just think, where does Government bring the money from? It is only our money, and by thinking otherwise, we are just making fools of ourselves. . . ."

He proceeded: "Here you have not to go according to the school rules. Why is it necessary then to have such a fine note-book, such an expensive note-book? We have enough papers of the used calendars, and you could easily write on their back side."

Manu had no other go but to return the note-book to Mr. Katteli. The Jail Superintendent could not help laughing out: "Bapu is cruel to the child. Well, I shall keep the note-book with myself, and you can take it whenever you like."

In the afternoon, when Mr. Katteli went to see Bapu, he asked him: "Did Manu return the note-book to you?". Mr. Katteli replied: "Yes, she did, but why don't you kindly allow her to use it?"

"No," said Bapu, "You are spoiling the child. The note-book must be returned. And please let me know if rupee one and a half was refunded or not."

In the evening, all were out for a walk. Bapu did not leave the matter there, and spoke to Manu: "Now, did you try to understand? By this how many lessons have I taught you today? 1. Who gives rupee one and a half? 2. Whom does the

Government suck and get that money from for our expenses? 3. Even if we get these conveniences, we should not avail of them, for in our country, are all children able to have easily such note-books for their studies? 4. Why not usefully utilize what is already available, for perhaps the calendar would otherwise be thrown away?"

Then Bapu said in fun: "If you happen to go outside (jail) before me, and if you have that beautiful note-book, someone may think of stealing it! Why give him a chance of that temptation?"

While Bapu was saying all this, the warder Raghunath came and gave the information that rupee one and a half had been received back.

And today that same calendar in which Bapu wrote and drew diagrams with his own hands is a proud possession of Manubahen, and serves to her as a practical lesson of her life!

Letters to Children

[It would be no exaggeration to state that there must have been hundreds, if not thousands, of letters addressed to children not only in India but abroad too, by Bapu, to whom children were, in his own words, his "life".]

To Ashram Children

Hardwar,
Phalgun shudi 3, Monday

Boys and Girls,

Children are innocent, loving and benevolent by nature. Evil comes in only when they become older. They are innocent even in their mischief. If this holds good in your case, each of you should serve others; helping them to rise higher and saving them from a fall.

You should watch and if necessary warn one another. Your watch should not be like that of policeman but of God. God watches us all not with a view to punish but to chasten. Such should be the nature of your watch also.

You must teach others what they do not know. Whoever

speaks an untruth should be lovingly turned away from you. Remember, you must keep the promise you have

* * *

Chaitra vadi 9, Day of Silence

Boys and Girls,

What fine fellows you are! Kakasaheb complains that he used to write to you, but you had not the leisure to reply to his letters. Are things any better now? Must you go on expecting others to write to you, while you do nothing in return?

Remember the phrase in the Gita, *parasparam bhavayantah*. Benefits have to be mutual not only as between God and man, but also as between man and man, teacher and pupil, friend and friend. He who only receives but does not give is guilty of breaking the vow of *asteya* (non-stealing).

Yamas like truth, non-violence and the like are obligatory on all students, for one who does not keep these observances is not entitled to prosecute any studies.

I find I have passed from gay to grave. But never mind. There is no law against combining instruction with amusement.

* * *

Nandi,
Vaishakh vadi 13

Boys and Girls,

It is true that Kanti is out. But you have formed an association. So you have built up an organization. There is one advantage in an organization. It continues to exist whether the number of its members increases or decreases. Mahajan, Panch, Nation, Community, an organization—all these never die. If all the members whom we know today die, even then the organization continues to exist. There are many such organizations in the country even today. Your small organization must also become like that.

A king may die but Government never dies. It lives for ever. So in France when the King died, it was said, "The King is dead; long live the King." This means that the throne of the King

never remains vacant. So should it be with your association.

I have continued to write to you every week, as far as I could in spite of your holidays, so that you may acquire such a habit. I will ask you to account for all the letters I have written during the holidays.

* * *

Day of Silence

Boys and Girls,

I remembered you all very much during my Mysore tour because there were many more things which you could have seen than I could.

My time for sight-seeing is over. I can live only for the work I have in hand. It would be a sin for me to take a single breath or anything else. But the natural beauty of Mysore, or various institutions, her gardens, murals and paintings are things for you to see.

But we are helpless in the matter. We can hardly do all that we wish to do: if we could do everything at will, goodness knows how many worlds would already have been created and destroyed. Contentment is therefore the best of riches.

* * *

Day of Silence

Boys and Girls,

I understand why I cannot have letters from you regularly. You are all very busy nowadays. If your work is real service I am ready to take your letter as written.

If the body serves but the mind is absent, our service can bear no fruit at all. There can be no self-indulgence in service. I hope the fragrance of your service will spread itself.

A servant does not ask to become leader. He expects no service from others. He is satisfied with what he gets and has no complaints at all. He has only the right to serve. What matters if he does not get food or shelter in return?

It is God's grace that there are undistressed persons even in

the areas of distress. When all are in distress who can serve the nurse? So we must fend for ourselves when we go out to serve. We must not rely on others, but should be thankful to them for such help as they can afford to give.

* * *

Day of Silence

Boys and Girls,

I would say that only now your classes are functioning in the right way. For you are having an object lesson in service. Literary education is intended only to quicken our spirit of service. Now that you have the opportunity to render service, pour your soul into it and learn to enjoy it thoroughly.

When you serve, do not give yourself up to spiritual pride and say, "I do it." The service of the proud is worth nothing. The Gita is there to teach us that we do nothing, that we can do nothing. We are only the instruments of God's will.

What is the difference between a watch and a human being? A watch does not work by itself. It is set going by a man. In the same way, we do not move, we do not act by ourselves. The power that moves us is God.

Just as a watch stops when its wound-up spring has run out, so also when our spring is done, our cart comes to a dead halt. While that cart is still on the move, we feel that a certain freedom of action is granted to us. Let us use that freedom to learn and do the will of the great Carpenter.

* * *

Yeravda Palace,

Day of Silence

Little Birds,

Ordinary birds cannot fly without wings. With wings, of course, all can fly. But if you, without wings, will learn how to fly, then all your troubles will indeed be at an end. And I will teach you that.

See, I have no wings, yet I come flying to you every day in

thought. Look, here is Vimala, here is Hari and here Dharma Kumar. And you also can come flying to me in thought.

There is no need of a teacher for those who know how to think. The teacher may guide us, but he cannot give us the power of thinking. That is latent in us. Those who are wise get wise thoughts.

Tell me who, amongst you, are not praying properly in Prabhubhai's evening prayer.

Send me a letter signed by all, and those who do not know how to sign may make a cross.

"The Pure in Heart"

[The following letter was written by Bapu from Yeravda Jail to Arun Chandra, ailing son of Shri Satish Chandra Das Gupta of Khadi Pratisthan, Calcutta.]

My dear Arun,

Your letter after many days was received yesterday. The previous two letters were never received.

You must not give way to despair. Even organic defects have been known to have been removed or at least brought under control. Proper breathing, proper diet and fresh air, added to the will-to-be-better brings the desired recovery. You should have a living faith in God and know He will keep your body intact so long as He has use for it.

And why do you think that we can serve only with the body? Mind is a far more powerful instrument of service. Those serve best who have perfect purity of heart. Indeed we serve so as to attain perfect purity. Thoughts of the pure in heart can do what the bodies with corrupt hearts can never do. Therefore, in no case have you the slightest cause for despair.

Do not seek to probe how thoughts work. Enough for you to believe that they do work and produce mighty results. Therefore, always cultivating purity of heart, you should be perfectly at peace whether you are well in body or not. Will you do this?

Continue to write to me and tell me about the members of the family. Give my love to Kaka and ask him please to write to me. My love to you all.

Bapu

* * *

To the Father of an ailing Child

Dear friend,

What can I possibly prescribe for a six months old baby suffering from paralysis? There is no prescription but prayer to God. Any medicine is for me unthinkable. You may gently massage the affected parts, put the baby in the sun and give him nothing but milk and fruit juices. And if God wishes, he will recover. If he does not you should courageously resign yourself to the separation.

He who gives, may also take away.

Yours sincerely,

M.K. Gandhi

To the Children

[The following letters were written by Bapu to children whom he had met at Selly Oak, London, during his visit at the time of the Round. Table Conference in 1931.

From Yeravda Prison

My dear Nan,

Your attempt to write a letter to me was very good. And what a reindeer you have sent! What lovely horns!

I am sorry I am not playing with the goats, though they are brought before me everyday twice to be milked. I don't play because when they come, I am always doing something which I must not give up.

Yes, there are a few flowers but nothing much to speak of. The ground is stony and they can't afford in prison to lay out flowerbeds.

You must write again.

Kisses to both of you.

28-2-'32 Bapu

* * *

Dear Nan and Tangai,

You have sent me a sweet letter.

I see you are making friends with birds. We have made friends with a cat and her kittens. I call her sister. It is delightful to watch her love for her young ones. She teaches them all sorts of things by simply doing them.

God bless you.

With kisses,

22-5-'32 Bapu

* * *

My dear little friends, Nan, Anna, Gilleon and Lydia,

I was delighted to have your sweet notes with funny drawings made by you. You do not mind my sending one note for all of you. After all, you are all one in mind though not in body.

Yes, it is little children like you who will stop all war. This means that you never quarrel with other boys and girls, or among yourselves. You can't stop big wars, if you carry on little wars yourselves.

How I wish I were with you to celebrate Nan's and Anna's birthdays. May God bless them, and bless you all. My kisses to you all, if you will let me kiss you, and Nan will pass on my love to Esther. Won't she?

24-8-'32 Bapu

* * *

Yeravda Central Prison,
23rd February 1933

My dear Tangai,

You have sent me a note not written by you. Therefore you

cannot complain if I send you a reply not written by me.

I know that Uncle Charlie eats much salt, but you must not copy bad habits of elderly people, and eating much salt is a bad habit, and much salt spoils the original flavour of things with which it is mixed.

Uncle Charlie has also a habit of spoiling little children by giving them too many sweets. Therefore, if I were you, I should distribute sweets amongst lots of poorer children and I should feel happy at the thought of sharing with them gifts received from friends.

Love and kisses from us both.

Bapu

* * *

My dear child,

Having dictated this letter, it has got to go to Tangai, though it is going to cost 1/2 annas to the Harijan cause. Let us hope that both Nan and Tangai will make up for the loss a thousandfold and more.

Love,

Bapu

* * *

Delhi,
17th January 1935

My dear Tangai,

You are a very brave girl cheerfully going through the illnesses you get from time to time. You must ask Daddy this question: "Why do I get these sores when you are yourself a doctor? You should find a way of helping me." I hope you are much better now.

Love and kisses,

Bapu

* * *

Dear children,

Do you remember that there was a time when you used to

write to me? Should you not now that you have grown in years and wisdom? I was sorry to hear of Tangai's illness. The hat for delicate children like you is a necessary article of wear.

Love and kisses from Bapu.

Nandi Hill,
14-5-'36

Esther will tell you all about where I am at present.

* * *

My dear Nan,

I had hoped to send you a long chatty letter but I never got the time. Now Esther sends me a reminder. So here is this note to tell you that though I cannot write, I can never forget you. I hope both of you are happier than before.

Love and kisses to both of you.

Bapu

Segaon,
26-6-'36

* * *

To an Invalid Girl in Birmingham

[The following letter was written by Bapu to an invalid girl in Birmingham.]

Yeravda Central Prison,
5th January 1933

My dear daughter,

I was very pleased to get your letter. You are quite right in addressing me as you have done. I enjoy the happiness of having thousands of daughters. You are a welcome addition to the ever-growing family; and since I, a puny mortal, cannot cope with such a large family, I entrust you all to the safe keeping of the All-powerful and Eternal Father, and so I never feel the burden of having the large family; on the contrary, only the joy of possessing the trust remains.

I see that though you are an invalid, you have strong faith

and a great heart. May your faith increase with the progress of years and may you ever find peace in the midst of pain and sorrow.

Yes, I knew when I was fasting I had the prayers of many pure souls like yourself, and that knowledge sustained me greatly.

With love,

Yours,
Bapu
(M.K. Gandhi)

Fundamentals of Basic Education

The object of Basic Education is the physical, intellectual and moral development of the children through the medium of a handicraft. But I told that any scheme which is sound from the educative point of view and is efficiently managed is bound to be sound economically. For instance, we can teach our children to make clay toys that are to be destroyed afterwards. That too will develop their intellect. But it will neglect a very important moral principle, viz., that human labour and material should never be used in a wasteful or unproductive way. The emphasis laid on the principle of spending every minute of one's life usefully is the best education for citizenship and incidentally makes Basic Education self-sufficient.

Let us now glance at the fundamentals of Basic Education:

1. All education to be true must be self-supporting, that is to say, in the end it will pay its expenses excepting the capital which will remain intact.
2. In it the cunning of the hand will be utilized even up to the final stage, that is to say, hands of the pupils will be skilfully working at some industry for some period during the day.
3. All education must be imparted through the medium of the provincial language.
4. In this there is no room for giving sectional religious

training. Fundamental universal ethics will have full scope.

5. This education, whether it is confined to children or adults, male or female, will find its way to the homes of the pupils.
6. Since millions of students receiving this education will consider themselves as of the whole of India, they must learn an inter-provincial language. This common interprovincial speech can only be Hindustani written in Nagari or Urdu script. Therefore, pupils have to master both the scripts.

To a question as to what type of work boys of fourteen are expected to turn out after a seven years' course at a basic school, Bapuji's reply was as follows:

If the school had done its duty by them, boys of fourteen should be truthful, pure and healthy. They should be village-minded. Their brains and hands should have been equally developed. There would be no guile in them. Their intelligence would be keen but they would not be worried about earning money. They would be able to turn their hands to any honest task that came their way. They would not want to go into the cities. Having learnt the lessons of co-operation and service in the school, they would infect their surroundings with the same spirit. They would never be beggars or parasites.

Make Children Craft-minded

By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the State takes over the manufactures of these schools.

I hold that the highest development of the mind and the

soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e., the child should know why and the wherefore of every process. I am not writing this without some confidence, because it has the backing of experience. This method is being adopted more or less completely wherever spinning is being taught to workers. I have myself taught sandal-making and even spinning on these lines with good results. This method does not exclude a knowledge of history and geography. But I find that this is best taught by transmitting such general information by word of mouth. One imparts ten times as much in this manner as by reading and writing. The signs of the alphabet may be taught later when the pupil has learnt to distinguish wheat from chaff and when he has somewhat developed his or her tastes. This is a revolutionary proposal but it saves immense labour and enables a student to acquire in one year what he may take much longer to learn. This means all-round economy. Of course, the pupil learns mathematics while he is learning his handicraft.

I attach the greatest importance to primary education which according to my conception should be equal to the present matriculation less English.

As to the necessity and value of regarding the teaching of village handicrafts as the pivot and centre of education I have no manner of doubt. The method adopted in the institutions in India I do not call education, i.e., drawing out the best in man, but a debauchery of the mind. It informs the mind anyhow, whereas the method of training the mind through the village handicrafts from the very beginning as the central fact would promote the real, disciplined development of the mind resulting in conservation of the intellectual energy and indirectly also the spiritual.

We have up to now concentrated on stuffing children's minds with all kinds of information, without ever thinking of stimulating and developing them. Let us now cry a halt and concentrate on educating the child properly through manual work, not as a side activity, but as the prime means of

intellectual training. You have to train the boys in one occupation or another. Round this special occupation you will train up his mind, his body, his handwriting, his artistic sense, and so on. He will be master of the craft he learns.

Given the right kind of teachers, our children will be taught the dignity of labour and learn to regard it as an integral part and a means of their intellectual growth, and to realize that it is patriotic to pay for their training through their labour. The core of my suggestion is that handicrafts are to be taught, not merely for productive work, but for developing the intellect of the pupils. Surely, if the State takes charge of the children between seven and fourteen, and trains their bodies and minds through productive labour, the public schools must be frauds and teachers idiots, if they cannot become self-supporting.

It might be objected that in the middle ages nothing else excepting handicrafts was taught. But the occupational training, then, was far from serving an educational purpose. In this age those born to certain professions had forgotten them, taken to clerical careers and were lost to the countryside. The remedy lies in imparting the whole art and science of a craft through practical training and there, through imparting the education.

All-Round Development of the Child

I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g., hands, feet eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words, an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds *pari passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. According to this theory, therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another.

The baneful effects of absence of proper co-ordination and harmony among the various faculties of body, mind and soul respectively are obvious. They are all around us; only we have lost perception of them owing to our present perverse associations.

Take the case of our village folk. From their childhood upward they toil and labour in their fields from morning till night like their cattle in the midst of whom they live. Their existence is a weary, endless round of mechanical drudgery unrelieved by a spark of intelligence or higher grace of life. Deprived of all scope for developing their mind and soul, they have sunk to the level of the beast. Life to them is a sorry bungle which they muddle through anyhow.

On the other hand, what goes by the name of education in our schools and colleges in the cities today is in reality only intellectual dissipation. Intellectual training is there looked upon as something altogether unrelated to manual or physical work. But since the body must have some sort of physical exercise to keep it in health, they vainly try to attain that end by means of an artificial and otherwise barren system of physical culture which would be ridiculous beyond words if the result was not so tragic.

The young man who emerges from this system can in no way compete in physical endurance with an ordinary labourer. The slightest physical exertion gives him headache; a mild exposure to the sun is enough to cause him giddiness. And what is more, all this is looked upon as quite 'natural'. As for the faculties of the heart, they are simply allowed to run to seed or to grow anyhow in a wild undisciplined manner. The result is moral and spiritual anarchy. And it is regarded as something laudable.

As against this, take the case of a child in whom the education of the heart is attended to from the beginning. Supposing he is set to some useful occupation like spinning, carpentry, agriculture, etc., for his education, and in that connection is given a thorough comprehensive knowledge relating to the theory of the various operations that he is to

perform, and the use and construction of the tools that he would be wielding. He would not only develop a fine, healthy body but also a sound, vigorous intellect that is not merely academic but is firmly rooted in and is tested from day to day by experience.

His intellectual education would include a knowledge of mathematics and the various sciences that are useful for an intelligent and efficient exercise of his avocation. If to this is added literature by way of recreation, it would give him a perfect well-balanced, all-round education in which the intellect, the body and the spirit have all full play and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole.

Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education.

4

How to Train the Young

Children inherit the qualities of the parents, no less than their physical features. Environment does play an important part, but the original capital on which a child starts life is inherited from its ancestors. I have always seen children successfully surmounting the effects of evil inheritance. That is due to purity being an inherent attribute of the soul.

A wise parent allows the children to make mistakes. It is good for them once in a while to burn their fingers.

I would develop in the child his hands, his brain and his soul. The hands have almost atrophied. The soul has been altogether ignored.

It is not man's duty to develop all his faculties to perfection: his duty is to develop all his God-ward faculties to perfection and to suppress completely those of contrary tendencies.

Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity?

Literary education should follow the education of the hand—the one gift that visibly distinguishes man from the beast. It is a superstition to think that the fullest development of man is impossible without a knowledge of the art of reading and writing. That knowledge undoubtedly adds grace to life,

but is in no way indispensable for man's moral, physical or material growth.

In my scheme of things the hand will handle tools before it draws or traces the writing. The eyes will read the pictures of letters and words as they will know other things in life, the ears will catch the names and meanings of things and sentences. The whole training will be natural, responsive and, therefore, the quickest and the cheapest in the land.

The children of my school will, therefore, read much more quickly than they will write. And when they write they will not produce daubs as I do even now (thanks to my teachers), but they will trace correct letters even as they will trace correct figures of the objects they may see. If the schools of my conceptions ever come into being, I make bold to say that they will vie with the most advanced schools in quickness, so far as reading is concerned, and even writing if it is common ground that the writing must be correct and not incorrect as now is in the vast majority of cases.

The eyes, the ears and the tongue come before the hand. Reading comes before writing and drawing before tracing the letters of the alphabet. If this natural method is followed the understanding of the children will have much better opportunity of development than when it is under check by beginning the children's training with the alphabet.

Education for Non-Violence

It should be an essential of real education that a child should learn that, in the struggle of life, it can easily conquer hate by love, untruth by truth, violence by self-surrender.

What kinds of vocations are the fittest for being taught to children in urban schools? There is no hard and fast rule about it. But my reply is clear. I want to resuscitate the villages of India. Today our villages have become a mere appendage to the cities. They exist, as it were, to be exploited by the latter and depend on the latter's sufferance. This is unnatural. It is only when the cities realize the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive

from them, instead of selfishly exploiting them, that a healthy and moral relationship between the two will spring up. And if the city children are to play their part in this great and noble work of social reconstruction, the vocations through which they are to receive their education ought to be directly related to the requirements of the villages. So far as I see the various processes of cotton manufacture from ginning and cleaning of cotton to the spinning of yarn, answer this test as nothing else does. Even today cotton is grown in the villages and is ginned and spun and converted into cloth in the cities. But the chain of processes which cotton undergoes in the mills from the beginning to the end constitutes a huge tragedy of waste in men, materials and mechanical power.

My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning, carding, etc., is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages and lay the foundation of a juster social order in which there is no unnatural division between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom.

All this would be accomplished without the horror of a bloody class-war or a colossal capital expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or technical skill. Lastly, by obviating the necessity for highly specialized talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands. But who will bell the cat? Will the city folk listen to me at all? Or, will mine remain a mere cry in the wilderness? Replies to these and similar questions will depend more on lovers of education . . . living in cities than on me.

If we want to eliminate communal strife, we must start with

foundations pure and strong by rearing our younger generation on the education I have adumbrated. That plan springs out of non-violence. I suggested it in connection with the nation's resolve to effect complete prohibition, but I may tell you that even if there was to be no loss of revenue, and our exchequer was full, this education would be a *sine qua non* if we did not want to urbanize our boys. We have to make them true representatives of our culture, our civilization, of the true genius of our nation. We cannot do so otherwise than by giving them a course of self-supporting primary education. Europe is no example for us. It plans its programmes in terms of violence because it believes in violence. I would be the last to minimize the achievement of Russia, but the whole structure is based on force and violence. If India has resolved to eschew violence, this system of education becomes an integral part of the discipline she has to go through. We are told that England expends millions on education, America also does so, but we forget that all that wealth is obtained through exploitation. They have reduced the art of exploitation to a science, and might well give their boys the costly education they do. We cannot, will not, think in terms of exploitation, and we have no alternative but this plan of education which is based on non-violence.

Ashram Ideal of Education

[The following translation by Shri V.G. Desai of some of the notes on the Ashram ideal of education written by Mahatma Gandhi in Gujarati appeared in the issues of *Harijan* of July 15 and August 5, 1950.]

I have my own perhaps peculiar views on education which have not been accepted by my colleagues in full, and here they are:

1. Young boys and girls should have co-education till they are eight years of age.
2. Their education should mainly consist in manual training under the supervision of an educationist.

3. The special aptitudes of each child should be recognized in determining the kind of work he (or she) should do.
4. The reasons for every process should be explained when the process is being carried on.
5. General knowledge should be imparted to each child as he begins to understand things. Learning to read or write should come later.
6. The child should first be taught to draw simple geometrical figures, and when he has learnt to draw these with ease, he should be taught to write the alphabet. If this is done, he will write a good hand from the very first.
7. Reading should come before writing. The letters should be treated as pictures to be recognized and later on to be copied.
8. A child taught on these lines will have acquired considerable knowledge according to his capacity by the time he is eight.
9. Nothing should be taught to a child by force.
10. He should be interested in everything taught to him.
11. Education should appear to the child like play. Play is an essential part of education.
12. All education should be imparted through the mother tongue.
13. The child should be taught Hindi-Urdu as the national language, before he learns letters.
14. Religious education is indispensable, and the child should get it by watching the teacher's conduct and by hearing him talk about it.
15. Nine to sixteen constitutes the second stage in the child's education.
16. It is desirable that boys and girls should have co-education during the second stage also as far as possible.
17. Hindu children should now be taught Sanskrit and Muslim children Arabic.

18. Manual training should be continued during the second stage. Literary education should be allotted more time as is necessary.
19. The boys during this stage should be taught their parent's avocation in such a way that they will by their own choice obtain their livelihood by practicing the hereditary craft. This does not apply to the girls.
20. During this stage the child should acquire a knowledge of world history and geography, botany, astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, and algebra.
21. Each child should now be taught to sew and to cook.
22. Sixteen to twenty-five is the third stage, during which every young person should have an education according to his or her wishes and circumstances.
23. During the second stage (9-16) education should be self-supporting; that is, the child, all the time that he is learning, is working upon some industry, the proceeds of which will meet the expenditure of the school.
24. Production starts from the very beginning, but during the first stage it does not still catch up with the expenditure.
25. Teachers should be paid not very high salaries but only a living wage. They should be inspired by a spirit of service. It is a despicable thing to take any Tom, Dick or Harry as a teacher in the primary stage. All teachers should be men of character.
26. Big and expensive buildings are not necessary educational institutions.
27. English should be taught only as one of several languages. As Hindi is the national language, English is to be used in dealing with other nations and international commerce.

As for women's education I am not sure whether it should be different from men's and when it should begin. But I am strongly of opinion that women should have the same facilities as men and even special facilities where necessary.

There should be night schools for illiterate adults. But I do

not think that they must be taught the three R's; they must be helped to acquire general knowledge through lectures, etc., and if they wish, we should arrange to teach them the three R's also.

Experiments in the Ashram have convinced us of one thing, viz., that industry in general and spinning in particular should have pride of place in education which must be largely self-supporting as well as related to and tending to the betterment of rural life.

Real education begins after a child has left school. One who has appreciated the value of studies is a student all his life. His knowledge must increase from day to day while he is discharging his duty in a conscientious manner.

The superstition that no education is possible without a teacher is an obstacle in the path of educational progress. A man's real teacher is himself. And nowadays there is ample apparatus available for self-education.

A diligent person can easily acquire knowledge about many things by himself and obtain assistance of a teacher when one is needed. Experience is the biggest of all schools.

Quite a number of crafts cannot be learnt at school but only in the workshop. Knowledge of these acquired at school is often only parrot-like. Knowledge of the other subjects can be acquired with the help of books.

What adults need is not so much a school as a thirst for knowledge, diligence and self-confidence.

The education of children is primarily a duty to be discharged by the parents. Therefore, the creation of a vital educational atmosphere is more important than the foundation of innumerable schools. When once this atmosphere has been established on a firm footing, the schools will come in due course.

This is the Ashram ideal of education which has been achieved to some extent, as every department for Ashram activity is a veritable school.

5

Understanding Gandhi

The Indian Renaissance and Gandhi

In just one hundred years, say from 1860 to 1960, we Indians have passed through the life-cycle of a cultural change. A 'renaissance' was born, grew in a stunted and distorted way, and passed away.

From Ram Mohan Roy to Jawaharlal Nehru, we have a galaxy of great men and women of moral courage and intellectual purpose, persons who lived and died nobly for this renaissance.

The 'culture' that these men strove to create was neither a revival nor a rejection of India's traditional culture. It was also neither an invitation to nor a rejection of modern culture. The new culture was both uniquely Indian and modern, i.e., also in the mainstream of contemporary human culture.

But the time span and the material as well as spiritual resources available to these pioneers were meagre. There is no precedent in human history to such a cultural change sought to be achieved in so short a time with such paucity of means. Its field of operation was also a vast subcontinent, with is varied people. These people had their own mature languages and cultures, reaching back over centuries, a colossal mass resisting change.

The net result of this phenomenon of speeded-up cultural change was that the renaissance was weak, stunted, and so bound to languish and die. This result is painful to accept and may, therefore, be denied; we usually deny unpleasant facts in our effort to overcome our pain, and in our spurious effort to overcome the facts by denying them.

This brings us to two urgent questions:

(1) Why should we study this renaissance?

(2) How should we go about the study of it?

(1) We must study our Renaissance not out of an antiquarian curiosity and detachment, but out of a real concern for the relevance of the Renaissance for problems of the present and the immediate future. This view has become almost a cliche, and we speak of 'discovering' what is living and relevant in Gandhian thought. There can be a utilitarian sense of relevance but what we mean here is not just that. By relevance we mean an attitude of assimilating the past to heighten our historical consciousness, which is necessary for a proper approach to the present. Thus, the pioneers of the Renaissance studied the ancient and medieval cultures of India with this consciousness of history. It is the task of our generation to complete the conquest of the historical world, which was begun by the pioneers.

(2) A proper study of the renaissance could be undertaken by trying to understand each one of the pioneers in the context of the totality of the efforts of all the pioneers. We must also take into account the millions of men and women who were drawn into the vortex of this century of turmoil. The 'masses' were not mere spectators but participants. Their thought and passions, heroism and cowardice, courage to think and proneness to inertia and superstition, were active factors in the total process of the renaissance.

The 'give and take' between the pioneers and the people (the leaders and the followers) must form the basis of our study of individuals, because individuals and the people acted together in what may be called 'experiments' to test various' truths', or ideas.

Gandhi's Experiments with Truth

'Experiments with truth' is a phrase which would sound barbarous to the ears of a person who is nurtured exclusively in our tradition. Even in other religions and cultural traditions, Truth is considered far too sacred to be a proper subject for experiments.

But the phrase is familiar to us because Gandhi used it as the title for his autobiography. What would have appeared blasphemous to most of us, with our traditional reverence for 'truth' and resistance to a secular use of such concepts as 'truth', 'spirit', 'moral', etc., has become quite familiar, and agreeably tolerable.

How could this happen? To answer this would be to enter into a lengthy explanation about the uniqueness and greatness of Gandhi. Only, we may point out, it would be wrong to suppose that experimenting with 'truth' by Gandhi reveals his secular attitude to problems. Neither he nor his predecessors were irreligious, and we shall fail to grasp their world-view if we attribute to them a secular and 'scientific' (in the dry sense) attitude.

What we can say, however, is that Gandhi stands almost at the end of a process of cultural change in India, and that the whole process was an 'experiment' with new ways of economic and political living and, above all, with new concepts and norms of human behaviour. The changes in economic and political life were not only obvious but also extremely painful and humiliating, but all the same they were surface changes. They left the masses and the elite benumbed and dejected in the initial shock. What happened then was a stirring of the 'soul' of men. This stir was not confined to the elite, but had an invisible non-vocal mass-depth. After the stir (in the minds) the

experiment began in diverse direction, with diverse means, projects, and hopes. In a deep sense, this experiment was oriented towards finding the 'truth' of our being, of our existence. As individuals and as groups, we were made conscious of our wretched existence as subjects of foreign rule, and also as inheritors of a social and spiritual heritage which faced a new challenge. The urge for political freedom was only a partial shock response to the total existence to which we were condemned. Much more was involved than political freedom.

The total question of 'human truth' was posed, partly because this problem of 'truth' was familiar to us as inheritors of our mature spiritual tradition, and partly because the problem of 'human truth' was poignantly raised and had remained unsolved in the culture of the West.

Gandhi called his autobiography an 'Experiment with Truth' because he rightly felt that he was one amongst the many seekers of this truth. He, amongst others, fully realized that the 'search for truth' was the pre-occupation of the human era, of science, wars, revolutions, of deep unrest and anxiety coupled with courage of individuals and the masses.

Gandhi reveals himself in his autobiography as a religious man, but his actions are secular in their conceptualization and technique. There is a dualism and it develops at times into a wide gap, a contradiction, while on other occasions the gap stands bridged over.

We shall return to this point of dualism in greater detail elsewhere; but here it will be relevant to point out that Gandhi was following his quest for human truth in the footsteps of earlier pioneers. Both in political action and thinking Gandhi was unique, but was at the same time following a trail blazed by his predecessors.

Placing in Relation to Predecessors and Contemporaries

Now, before we proceed to probe the links which bind Gandhi to his predecessors and show his unique strength in freeing himself from these bonds, we must divest our minds of

some false concepts. These concepts were of course relevant in their own historical context in the sense that they were functional or useful for the historical tasks which the pioneers were engaged in. But, after a century, the concepts have to be rejected as fetters or blinds which cover the truth about the past situation.

This point will best be clarified by an illustration. Let us take the established view that the pioneers were divided into two sharply opposed camps—the reformers and the revivalists, or the liberals and the extremists, or the Anglicized and the patriotic. These dichotomizing epithets were valid when they were used by real antagonists in their real battles. The words ('reformers', 'revivalsts', etc.) were not empty epithets, but words with meaning, impact, and utility. They were pregnant with praise and censure, with accusations and exhortations implied in their utterance. They sought to communicate to the 'masses' for their 'education'. Propaganda had become the need of the elite and the thirst of the masses. They were weapons of defence and attack in the battle of ideas which raged in the days of the pioneers.

Moreover, these words were new but were not arbitrary labels. They were used 'metaphorically', i.e., they pointed to ideas, persons, and events which pertained to the historical and contemporary scene in Britain or in Europe. The word 'reformer', for instance, echoed the whole movement of the thought and action in Europe since the European renaissance and later through the Reformation and the French Revolution. So when Ram Mohan Roy and Ranade spoke of 'social reform' they were somehow linking themselves to all that happened in Europe and to the social upheavals in modern European history.

But today we must reconsider these dichotomies, concepts and words, and try to understand the total situation in which these had a living substance. History has placed us outside the situation, as new wayfarers. We can never traverse the path over which the pioneers struggled in their life-time. We can never feel the hopes and failures experienced by them. We can only ponder on the pale and often distorted reflection or image of the

'human situation' in which the battles of the pioneers were fought. This is a serious loss and a handicap. But it is compensated, however poorly, by the 'detachment' which we possess in respect of the past situation. This detachment is not our hardwon acquisition or achievement, but a gift of the time-flow. But this is precious and must be used well by us.

Gandhi, like any other human being has to be understood both as an individual and as social being.

Both individuals and their social 'fields' are finite and changing. Their reciprocity or mutual actions, however, imply that both individuals and their fields possess some resistance to change. Their structures resist change.

The resistance is, however, not absolute because these structures are unstable. Mutual 'action', reciprocity is not only possible, but the very condition of the existence and 'life' of individuals and of their social 'fields'.

When we try to understand Gandhi or any other person, who is not with us, we as observers try to understand the interaction between the person and his 'field'. This understanding is always finite and imperfect. There are two reasons for this: (1) the observer, who tries to understand, is outside the reciprocity between the person and his 'field', and (2) the observer himself is a finite human being with his own personality and social field.

Let us take a special case when the 'observer' is himself the person to be understood, that is when a person is writing his autobiography. Gandhi wrote his autobiography in 1925-26. He was then 55 years old. One may suppose that since the 'observer' and his subject were identical, the understanding would be perfect. Only the temporal 'distance' intervenes in such a special case. But what do we find? Gandhi's autobiography is authentic, frank, and full of intimate details; but it is not revealing. It is opaque, because it is selective and written with a moral purpose. Gandhi himself realized this poignantly. He at first hesitated, and wrote only when prevailed upon by Swami Anand. He said: 'It is not my purpose to attempt a real autobiography. . . . But I should certainly like to

narrate my experiments in the spiritual field which are known only to myself. . . . The more I reflect and look back on the past, the more vividly do I feel my limitations.'

Gandhi has referred to the vivid realization of his 'limitations', in the sense of 'limitations' of his powers to be a perfect human being. His 'experiments' are struggles to overcome these limitations. But implicit in such limitations is the human limitation to know oneself perfectly. No one can write one's 'real' autobiography. Gandhi perhaps realized this, though he has not said so explicitly.

We have here dealt with the case of Gandhi's autobiography only as a 'special' case, that is, the case of an 'observer' where subject is he himself.

The difficulties of observers who are placed in a different time or place from that of the subject are immense. To write a biography is, therefore, a task of insuperable dimensions.

All biographies are, therefore, only sketches drawn from a particular angle. Moreover, the sketch involves the observer, his own time, place, and personality.

This is best illustrated from the numerous biographies and the short but valuable utterances by differently situated persons about Gandhi's life. Pyarelal and other Indians render their own accounts of Gandhi's teachings and activities. Romain Rolland, Einstein, and others give their impressions of the significance of Gandhi's life-work. Tilak and Gokhale have spoken about Gandhi, so also Ambedkar, Jinnah, and others. Then there are also others who have been very hostile to Gandhi, the extreme case being that of Godse who killed Gandhi and went to the gallows with his Geeta in his hand.

On the one hand, there is the objective fact of Gandhi's life enmeshed with lives of countless human beings and human institutions; on the other, there are subjective appraisals of Gandhi's life in all its reciprocity with human existence. What is more, these two aspects, the objective and the subjective, cannot be neatly separated in the way in which we separate 'fact' and 'observation' in a scientific experiment. The two aspects coalesce into one human whole, because both facts and

observations are pervaded by human motivations, ideas and ideals, passions and aspirations.

The Approach of this Study

Any person will elude analysis. Great men do not differ from small men in this respect. No person is fully or transparently knowable. Others can never fully know why he committed a specific act. This is not surprising, because the actor himself is often not aware of why he does a certain thing. When he claims, and often believes implicitly, that he is fully aware of his motivations, he is indeed deluding himself.

Such is the case with our understanding of ourselves and others. It is, therefore, surprising that one writes a biography of another. It is also not less surprising that some are bold enough and self-sure enough to write autobiographies.

This is not to imply that both biographies and autobiographies have no value. But one must perceive the limits, the pitfalls and the gaps in all such attempts.

This is relevant to what we read and think about Gandhi. He had written an autobiography almost at the beginning of his public life, in a big way! He was already a 'Mahatma' by then, but we know that he humbly declined to accept this greatness imposed on him. This was a measure of the true greatness and strength of his mind.

By 1922, Gandhi's biographies were written and his work in South Africa and Champaran was described. His unique 'method of struggle' against injustice was given prominence. His personal life-style was commented upon. His 'philosophy' was discussed.

Gandhi lived and toiled unceasingly for almost three decades after 1920. Any student of Gandhian will see that in these three decades one sees only an extension of Gandhian thought and action, in its 'form' established by 1920. The scale of operations changed. From South Africa, a fragment of what may be called the totality of the British Empire and its enslaved people, the scale was enlarged to include the whole of the Indian subcontinent and its relations with world humanity.

But, with this colossal expansion, nothing changed basically, so far as Gandhi was concerned. He remained the same person, as he appears to us and to himself, in 1920. This should be steadily borne in mind, if one is attempting to understand the man.

Yet, as has been already said above, to understand Gandhi is a task that must remain tentative and incomplete. Let me add that this is true, even if one is undertaking the task of understanding the most humble, and apparently a dumb, human being. The more inarticulate a man, the more elusive will be his or her personality.

Gandhi was fortunately very articulate. He was an extrovert, though some people have felt that Gandhi was essentially an introvert. Both these terms are often used left-handedly as terms of censure. So one must be cautious in using them. Let me clarify that here the terms are used without any sense of praise or blame. Both extroverts and introverts can be good persons and even great persons.

The only point worth noting here is that Gandhi has written and conversed continuously on every possible and relevant subject. As already noted, he has written an autobiography, though it stops with the year 1920.

From these self-expository activities of Gandhi, one can build a somewhat simplistic but workable picture of Gandhi, as a person, his thought and action. Above all, we can at least try to probe the 'overall mood' of the man.

Here one may naturally and rightly ask in what sense I am referring to the 'overall mood' of Gandhi. What, after all, is an 'overall mood'? I must admit at the outset that I am not using the word in its strict and current connotation. We generally believe that 'moods' are passing, flitting mental phenomena. We, moreover, are apt to think that 'moods' are generally related to some outside events, which have an impact on the mind of a person. All this is legitimate, and normally 'mood' should mean a 'mood of joy' or a 'mood of grief' caused by some happy or unhappy event, etc., But here I am using the expression 'overall mood' in a different sense. If we go into the thoughts, actions

and responses of any person, we usually find that all these mental activities tend to gravitate towards some centre or core. This core is hidden and seldom revealed. But we feel the direction towards this core. Roughly, this core (or centre) is the overall mood of that person. It is this core that we broadly refer to when we say, for instance, that 'X is a pessimist' or that 'Y is a sceptic', or that 'Z is a revolutionary'.

Now that I have explained what I intend to convey by the term, 'overall mood', it will be perhaps appreciated why I am not using instead familiar terms like the 'ideology' of Gandhi, or the 'tenets' of Gandhism. The term 'philosophy' (of Gandhi) is of course not suitable, because it has either an erudite over-sophisticated prestigeousness about it, or a vapid and vacuous emptiness evoked by its over-use.

Gandhi was apt to think and act according to this overall mood. His insistence on translating every idea into concrete practice is itself an outcome of his unique mood. This is evident because many persons are apt to act in one way and think in another way. This is particularly true of persons whom we call intellectuals, but the phenomenon is common amongst persons of all classes and pertaining to all cultural style and religious persuasions.

If we now go behind the thoughts and activities of Gandhi and try to discover the core, the mood, the main-spring of it all, we are forced to halt. How do we go behind anybody's thoughts and actions? How do we probe the words and phrases used by a person?

The only method available to a researcher, on these lines, is to proceed from thoughts to 'sources' of these thoughts, and from actions to the 'gains' that were anticipated by the person.

Finally, the researcher may also try to guess the core by analyzing the general terms used by the person. For instance, the term 'truth' by itself has no content, unless it is misunderstood as a synonym for 'fact'. 'Truth' by itself cannot be comprehended, because it has always to be somebody's truth, a true statement made by someone or a true feeling reported by someone who experienced it. (A dream truthfully

reported by the dreamer is true in this sense, because he is reporting an authentic experience.)

It is well-known, and it is also true and authenticated with enough evidence, that Gandhi considered Raichand his spiritual *guru* and Gokhale his political *guru*. It is also true that Ruskin as well as Thoreau has influenced Gandhi in a vital way. And, above all, Gandhi's debt to Tolstoy is immense. But, do all these personal contacts, with individuals or their works, fully explain the awakening and growth of Gandhi's personality? It is true that a person or a book exerts incalculable influence on the mind of a person. Gandhi's way of saying this is: such and such an incident or book 'changed the course of my life'. I feel that Gandhi says this by way of paying a large-hearted compliment and handsome acknowledgement of debts.

I somehow feel that mere events or contacts with persons or reading of books do not effect dramatic conversions in the minds of people, who may even be considered as specially receptive. Very few persons are so easily converted. What is more Gandhi was not at all so receptive to new ideas. He was, one may say, quite tough. There is something odd in the idea of accepting somebody as his *guru* when we are dealing with such personalities as Gandhi.

Such men are innovators and proudly know their role of 'prophets' and leaders of men. But they are also humble and in their modesty and truthfulness they acknowledge their debt. But their roots and the strength of their greatness lie in the epoch, or more concretely, in the ethos of period which just precedes them. They are not disciples of men, but children of momentous periods of national and cultural history.

This is how I have looked at the problem of understanding Gandhi. To me Gandhi has appeared to be a man who truly awakened the spirit of the nation and the self-image of the people who were suffering humiliation under foreign rule and local oppression. But this double yoke could not have been felt by the elite and the people, if they had not moved out of their stupor by pioneers, who preceded Gandhi. Gandhi reached out to the stature of an Indian leader, but he stood on the

foundations laid in Western India by these pioneers.

The awakening of Gandhi is, therefore, a phenomenon, which has to be understood in its social depth, extension and intensity with reference to events and ideological conflicts in Western India (that is Gujarat and Maharashtra as taken together with Bombay as the centre).

So my project is simply to connect the 'awakening' of Gandhi with its social soil. As I have said earlier, Gandhi innovates and grows above the soil to new dimensions. But this creativity will be better understood if we could know the soil and the roots spread out in it.

6

The Moral Fervour of Gandhi

The Gandhi Household

Gandhi was young when Indian intellectuals were swept by a tidal wave of patriotism. In his stay in England as a student in 1888-91, however, he met Englishmen who had seen the limitations of patriotism, its narrow confines and dangers. Gandhi seems to have been a young man who fully reacted to both these aspects of patriotism. He became an ardent patriot and at the same time transcended patriotism. This double sidedness is the key to his enigmatic 'saintly' role in the Indian national movement.

His spiritually firm contact with Gokhale since 1896 explains how he could in his adult life firmly hold on to this duality of patriotism and humanism.

His *Hind Swaraj,* written in 1908, contains a phrase which to me appears a key to understanding Gandhi's 'dualism'. Gandhi, imagining that he was addressing the English rulers said, 'You English who have come to India are not good specimens of the English nation, nor can we, almost half-Anglicized Indians, be considered good specimens of the real Indian nation....Only on condition of our demands being fully satisfied, may you remain in India, and if you remain under those conditions, we shall learn several things from you and you will learn many things

from us. So doing we shall benefit each other and the world. But that will happen only when the roots of our relationship are sunk in a religious soil.

Now the significant phrase is "roots of our relationship". Gandhi is not here referring to the relationship between the British rulers and the Indian elite. He is referring to the relationship between the whole British nation and the entire Indian nation. In the beginning of the quoted paragraph, Gandhi has already rejected the claims of the British rulers and of the Indian elite to represent the British and Indian people, respectively. He distrusts the elite—the intellectual elite and the power-hungry elite. When Gandhi spoke of 'our relationship' he had in mind only the 'people' of both lands.

He urged that 'our relationship' must strike roots in a 'religious soil'. This sounds conservative and even obscurantist. But Gandhi only meant that the soil in which any human relationship could at all find roots was some fundamental elemental need of mankind. Such is the need for social cohesion and happiness and a sense of integrated social life, which gave birth to religious speculation in the dim past of the history of mankind.

What prompted him, in his early youth, to religious speculation is not clear from his autobiography or from other accounts of his familiar and larger environment. In the orthodox Hindu joint family, a child grows into adolescence surrounded by elders with authority. There is no division of sacred and profane authority, as religious rituals and practices are mainly confirmed to the household; and in all secular and sacred rituals children and adolescents do not have the urge or occasion to question the elders. This is unique and different from Christian and other religions with an establishment (the Church) outside the household.

The Gandhi household seems to be in no way different in this respect. As was true of most orthodox Hindu households, the menfolk were engaged in outdoor secular occupations, while the womenfolk were engaged in household cores and religious rituals. It is recorded that Gandhi's mother, Putalabai,

was an ardently religious person and practised fasting and other rituals with a fierce conviction. Gandhi's grandfather was a Ramanandi and Putalabai was a Pranami. So from the paternal and maternal sides, the tradition was not orthodox, but affected by medieval reformers who in turn were affected by contact with Muslim monotheism and Sufism. This eclectic background is also important.

Gandhi, in his autobiography, merely records his mother's religious observances. Though Gandhi belonged to a Vaishnava household, Jain monks had a free and respected entry into it. This is, however, quite a normal phenomenon in Gujarat. (Something of this kind will be uncommon in a Maharashtrian Brahman household.)

One can attribute the awakening of religious doubts and speculative activity in Gandhi's mind to the general climate of 'reform', of 'new thoughts' like those of the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj in the towns of Kathiawar.

Moreover, though Rajkot was a small place, it was the capital of a native ruler, and also an important centre of commerce. There was an important Muslim element in the population. Arab guards were employed by the Kathiawar (Saurashtra) rulers. (This was also the practice of the Maratha rulers. The Arab garrisons played a heroic part in defending Maratha forts against the British onslaught, even after the Peshawa ruler had surrendered to the British.) Arab traders were also conducting important business through Kathiawar ports. (In South Africa Indian traders and even Hindus who were not indentured coolies were called Arabs.)

So in the total social situation of Rajkot, there were three elements of power: (1) The Hindu ruler and his courtiers, (2) Arabs and other Muslims as soldiers and traders, and (3) the British, represented by the Resident, who symbolized the vast military might of the British Empire. The general atmosphere was feudal.

This was a situation entirely different from what obtained in contemporary Bombay and Poona. Round about 1885, Bombay was already a bourgeois colonial metropolis, in which men of

diverse races and creeds met in new confrontations. The elite among Hindus, Parsis, and Muslims came together and formed an 'enlightened' brotherhood. The British ruling caste was also in a somewhat uneasy contact with this elite brotherhood. The British could foresee the challenge inherent in the colonial situation, but they were patronisingly friendly to the Indian 'enlightened' elite.

In Poona, the elite consisted almost wholly of the Brahman and other high castes and their few non-Hindu contacts were only with men of other creeds in Bombay. These contacts were also tenuous in the early decades (1840-70), and the Poona elite developed, since 1874, mainly as a regional group full of flaws in outlook and tactics that were inevitable in its inbred cohesion.

We have seen how Bombay and Poona presented a totally different picture, when contrasted with the situation in Rajkot. The climate of fundamental change, in the thinking of the elite, was only faintly echoed in Rajkot. The meaning of this change, its real impact and moral significance was not understood in this distant port and courtly town of the Kathiawar peninsula. Even its relation with mainland Gujarat was weak and superficial.

Gandhi was, however, caught in the new spirit that brooded over mainland Gujarat, Bombay, and Maharashtra. He has recorded in his Autobiography that the spirit of reform had affected teachers in schools and also a number of prominent persons in the town of Rajkot.

Gandhi passingly remarks in his Autobiography that he 'had often to go to the Haveli (i.e., the Vaishnava temple). But it never appealed to me. I did not like its glitter and pomp. Also I heard rumours of immorality being practised there, and lost all interest in it. Hence I could get nothing from the Haveli'. Gandhi's remarks about the Haveli deserve some comment. First, a child and even a youth of sixteen does not normally get disgusted with "glitter and pomp". So probably in expressing his disgust the 55-year-old Gandhi is interpolating his elderly and austere views into his childhood experiences. His remarks that 'rumours of immorality' were heard by him deserve more

attention. This is something quite different from 'glitter and pomp' which a boy may actually enjoy. With 'rumours of immorality', the whole situation becomes too complex for the mind of a teenager. Sex has its double hold on an adolescent. It awakens in him natural sexual curiosity and ideas of its pleasurable fulfilment. At the same time, it also arouses all the passions of hatred and revulsion against authority, if authority is guilty of sexual corruption. And if religious authority is abused, the young mind is bound to feel intense anger against such 'holy corruption'.

From the history of the Renaissance in Gujarat, we learn that this particular type of 'holy corruption' by Vaishnava temple priests was rampant in Gujarat and in 1861 Karsandas Mulji fought against these corrupt temple Maharajas and exposed their lecherous misdeeds.

Incidentally, one may say that the whole phenomenon of a vigorous social and religious reform movement in Gujarat and Kathiawar is relevant to a proper understanding of Gandhi's response to the Havili, and also to the 'reformers' in Rajkot. The movement was initiated in Surat by Durgaram Manchharam (1809-78) in co-operation with Dadoba Pandurang (1814-92). Together they founded the Manava Dharma Sabha (also called Paramhamsa Sabha) in 1844, and propagated a humanist moralist Theism opposing theistic orthodoxy. Durgaram was in Kathiawar for eight years and worked there for social reform with the co-operation of Manishankar Kikani.

Another event may also be noted. The ruler of Navanagar was advised by a Brahmo Samaj Bengali sanyasi, Anandashrama Swami, to appoint a progressive prime minister and introduce reforms in his state. The ruler appointed a Maharashtra Brahman Vinayak Narayan Bhagwat. He not only introduced administrative reforms and encouraged education, but removed from service an Englishman who was a stooge of the Political Agent. There was, therefore, a conspiracy to remove Bhagwat. The courtiers, along with Nagar Brahmans in services and also those working under the influence of the Political Agent, were finally successful in securing the dismissal of this minister.

By 1886, when Gandhi was an adolescent and responding to the social situation and thought currents in Rajkot, the reform movement had already made a deep impression there. The rumours about the misdoings in the Haveli at Rajkot must have created a deep hostile impression on young Gandhi. He merely remarks that because of the rumours he 'lost all interest in it. Hence I could get nothing from the Haveli'.

I do not think the matter is that simple, if we remember that the Haveli had been the place of worship of the Gandhi family, and despite rumours, men and women of this family regularly visited it as a house of God. This, I think, would shatter the faith of a youth in his elders, their capacity to discriminate between moral and immoral, good and evil, sacred and profane. Already, the climate of reform and rational scepticism had infected the elders and youth of Rajkot ever since 1844. (This is testified to by the fact that in Morvi, also in Kathiawar, Mulshankar was overwhelmed as early as 1838 by a religious sceptical crisis when he saw that a rat was climbing on the Shivalingam in the temple. He left the house known as Swami Dayanand, the founder of Arya Samaj.)

In Gandhi's case, the loss of moral faith in family elders, even in his own devout mother, was very acute and painful. His words 'I could get nothing from the Haveli' have a larger implication beyond what they state literally. Young Gandhi felt that he could get nothing from his elders.

Let us pause at this stage and reflect on the total impact of such a situation on the mind of a sensitive young boy. With a naive but fresh and vigorous mind, the youth realized the moral chasm and that frightened him. His childhood idols were broken. The elders whom the child looked upon as persons endowed with superhuman qualities of strength, courage and integrity were found wanting. The protective shell in which the child grew up with confidence and a sense of utter security lay shattered. The concept of 'sacredness', which the child looked upon with respect, love, and awe, was dissolved. What confronted the child, as soon as it stepped on the threshold of adolescence and self-awareness, was a frightening moral

vacuum, disintegration of authority and protective cover, and a consequent feeling of moral helplessness and loneliness.

This trauma of adolescent moral loneliness may be said to be universal for every young generation. The long period of childhood dependence on elders is a biological necessity for the human child. It has its benevolent effect and allows the human child to live and grow in a slow way, and store up the experiences of joy, abandon, and curiosity in a manner which is unthinkable for the young ones of other animal species.

But tragedy overtakes the child, with the advent of adolescence and self-awareness. In a stratified stable and stagnated culture, or in the deadening mass societies of today, the tragedy of adolescence is soon overcome and the boy or girl is 'initiated' into the vortex of an inhuman, unauthentic routine, a life-style which violently crushes the self-awareness of adolescence into an acceptance of hedonistic rat-race. Orwell's terrifying picture of a totalitarian hell in his novel 1984 is only an exaggerated picture of what happened to adolescents in all traditional societies, and what happens today in mass societies.

Returning to Gandhi's predicament, or rather to the moral situation of all Hindu adolescents in the closing decades of the last century, we may find that there were some new factors which offered 'openings' for a few fortunate Hindu adolescents. They could then escape the tragedy of 'initiation' into a soulless routine, if they had the strength and sensitivity for a life of moral or intellectual adventure.

Gandhi was such a person and fortunate enough in the material conditions of his family circumstances. As a youth from an upper middle-class high-caste family of administrators (Diwans) in a native state, he could entertain the ambition to become a prime minister in the shoes of his father or a prosperous doctor or a lawyer. Alternatively, he could aspire to earn respect and leadership as a reformer dedicated to the cause of Indian social and political renaissance.

Going to England

From Gandhi's autobiography, it appears that he had an

inclination to become a doctor. The medical profession seemed to him respectable, lucrative and satisfying to his urge to render service to others. But the family elders still lived in the 'glory' of the Gandhi tradition of administrative power and attendant affluence. Mavji, the learned shrewd worldly-wise Brahman adviser of the Gandhi family, initiated the idea of Mohan's foreign travel for becoming a barrister and then a Diwan. He rejected the medical career as a 'poor ambition'. It is significant that Mohan's elder brother and also his uncle approved of Mavji's idea.

The crucial question that intrigued me most was: What prompted Gandhi to accept Mavji's proposal almost with indecent impatience? Pyarelal has quoted Gandhi to have said in reply to a question why he went to London and opted for the legal profession, 'In one word, ambition!' Pyarelal adds that this referred to Gandhi's ambition 'worthy to maintain his family tradition and live up to his father's expectations'. But, Pyarelal further quotes Gandhi as follows: 'I thought to myself if I go to England, not only shall I become a barrister. . . but I shall be able to see England, the land of philosophers and poets, the very centre of civilization '.

These are youthful and candid remarks by Gandhi, who was always forthright in giving expression to his surface-feelings and hedonistic impulses. So one must accept them as true. But if we analyse the situation in 1888, just before he left for England, we come across a few 'gaps' in Gandhi's 'ambition' and love for the English 'civilization'. If we ignore these gaps, we cannot understand or explain his behaviour in England and also all his subsequent life-style.

If we look into the fate of Gandhi's father, and even of his grandfather as Diwans in the new political set-up in Kathiawar after 1876 under British political Agents, we can see easily that the post of a Diwan was no position either of power, security, or affluence. The mind of Joshiji, the Brahman adviser of the Gandhi family, dwelt nostalgically in the glory of the past. Gandhi's mother also perhaps held such outmoded ambitions of retrieving lost prestige. But Gandhi and his brother Laxmidas, I

think, entertained no such illusions. They must have thought of a lucrative legal career in Rajkot or Bombay as feasible and promising. There were already in Rajkot, a number of prosperous lawyers and even one barrister (whom Joshiji mentions in his conversations with Putalabai).

A second point about Gandhi's desire to visit the 'very centre of civilization' also deserves scrutiny. From his own testimony, he was very tolerant in his boyhood to all religions, but was hostile to Christianity. This was but natural, because by 1885 the Indian youth were generally hostile to the British, to the white man, and also to his religion. It is, moreover, obvious from his autobiography that boys of his age in Rajkot detested not only the British foreigners and Christian missionaries, but also the Hindu reformers who were patriotic, but critical of Hindu tradition.

But on one point, the young boys accepted the teaching of some of the reformers; the reformers argued that if Indians wanted to overthrow the British rulers, they should become physically strong and daring in action. For this purpose, they must break their caste rules and taboos.

Sheikh Mehtab, the friend of Karsandas' elder brother and also of Mohan, embodied this spirit of defiance and patriotic daring. He was no soft reformer. He is a strange figure, which moved like a shadow with Gandhi, first in Rajkot, then in South Africa. There was a bond between these two men—between a 'saint' and a 'dare-devil', who had no moral scruples but who had a steady patriotic spark in his heart. After the youthful episodes, about which Gandhi writes in his Autobiography with horror, indignation and shame, one would expect the friendship to snap. But this did not happen. Mehtab waved farewell to Mohan, when Gandhi embarked in Bombay on his London voyage; he received letters addressed to Kasturba by Gandhi from London, and he delivered them to her. He received monetary help from Gandhi from London, out of his limited allowances. Later, Mehtab went to Durban at Gandhi's invitation to look after his household. There, finally, Gandhi threw him out for the offence of bringing a prostitute in the

house. But even after this, Mehtab remained devoted and loyal to Gandhi, and wrote patriotic poem which Gandhi printed in his *Indian Opinion*.

Gandhi's indulgent attitude towards Mehtab is relevant to the issue of Gandhi's attitude to reform and patriotism. He, like other youth of his generation, was impatient with mild moderate reforms, and had an admiration for desperate anti-British courage. That Mehtab was a Muslim was just an accident, and his moral failings were considered by Gandhi as mere blemishes which could be cured with the fiery ordeal of patriotic sacrifice. It is also to be noted that Mehtab had a chivalrous side to his otherwise vicious character. He used to defend weak boys against the bullies in the Rajkot school, and he could, therefore, see in Gandhi a valiant champion of the oppressed Indians in Africa. Gandhi, it seems, recognised this aspect of his make-up and turned a blind eye to his flaws.

If one takes all the above into consideration, one fails to discern any basis for Gandhi's expressed view that he went to England, as on a pilgrimage to the 'very centre of civilization'. But here again we must pause and think of the dual attitude of hatred and admiration that Indian reformers and patriots had towards the British.

Ambivalence in Attitude to the West

The generation of young people in Western India during the pre-1870 period held only the attitude of admiration for the British. This was, of course, tempered by the rising patriotic consciousness and we find among these pioneers such great patriots as Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade, K.T. Telang, and others. These pioneers had a deep respect for India's ancient civilization. But, the succeeding generation to which Gandhi, Gokhale, and Vivekanand belonged were men of a new fevour and mould. They had imbibed the dual attitude of admiration and frustrated anger towards the British and axiomatically, towards the entire Western civilization.

In Maharashtra, this new dual attitude took on a sharp anti-British colour as early as 1874 under the able leadership of

Vishnushastri Chiplunkar and later on of Tilak. This new orientation was uniquely coloured by the peculiar social milieu and historical memories of Poona and its Maharashtra hinterland. The events in the political and social fields during 1870-90 in this part of the country had very wide repercussions reaching up to Bengal.

But reverting to the question why Gandhi undertook the voyage to England, we may remark that beyond 'ambition' and a curiosity to know the 'English civilization', there was another more fundamental reason. The young Mohan of eighteen years of age was faced with a blank, a moral void and wanted to escape the horrifying personal situation. In this light, the chapter 'Preparation for England' in the Autobiography provides many clues. Gandhi listened to the initial proposal made by Joshiji to Putalabai and Laxmidas. Both of them were quite reluctant to entertain it. But Laxmidas finally agreed to it and it was decided that Mohandas should go to Porbandar and secure his uncle's permission and through him some help from the Porbandar state.

Gandhi starts on a strenuous journey and entertains slender hopes that the project will be successful. But he was almost overjoyed. In the Autobiography, he has observed 'I have already said I was a coward. But at that moment my cowardice vanished before the desire to go to England which completely possessed me'.'

It is recorded in *My Childhood with Gandhi* by his nephew Prabhudas that Gandhi 'reasoned with her [mother Putalabai] for months to persuade her to let him go'.

Pyarelal has given the details of the whole episode and as one reads of the efforts made by Gandhi in persuading his mother and uncle, securing the amount of Rs. 5,000 for the sojourn, and countering the petty manoeuvres of his cousins, one is filled with wonder and admiration at his tenacity. The humiliation he suffered at the hands of Haly and Weston must have shaken him up into the realization that the 'glory' of the Gandhi household had long vanished. The final humiliation was suffered by Gandhi when he was hooted in public in Rajkot

and ostracized by the caste assembly in Bombay. For five months Gandhi undergoes an ordeal of anxiety and humiliation and finally embarks on his journey.

The hypothesis that Gandhi embarked on his voyage in a state of mental storm and moral vacuum has significance for understanding his *moral enthusiasm* and moral experiments which continued to the end of of his long life: The hypothesis, therefore, needs a little elaboration and analysis.

The Family Situation on the Eve of the Departure

Mohan's father died in 1885 at the age of 63. The last three years of his life were miserable and Mohan had to help his mother in nursing him during this period of grave illness. Since 1881 when Mohan was 12, he was involved in his school work and a little later in his family. Mohan was married in 1883 and his elder brother was also married at the same time. So, in addition to school and father's illness, Mohan and his brother were involved in their premature sex-life. The family had an exalted status in the small community of Rajkot, but it had lost its former affluence and power.

It is difficult for us to grasp the situation within the Gandhi family, but it is necessary to do so if we wish to seek the roots of Gandhi's moral suffering in the family situation and his frustration, anger, and final bid to escape to England. Gandhi's autobiographical description of the family is, I think, so overlaid with his peculiar pedagogic moralizing tone that it effectively conceals the reality behind the facade of his idealization and glorification.

In fact, this glorification anticipates the exaggerated tone in which he almost deified the Indian civilization in *Hind Swaraj* in 1908. For him, the Hindu civilization was only an enlarged version of the patriarchal joint family, in contrast to his conception of the 'materialist' civilization of the West based on the 'selfish individual'. Gandhi, in all good faith, suppresses the suffering of an individual in the Hindu joint family and particularly his own suffering during the tender age of 12 to 18

years. This 'blindness' to the reality of a joint family in its negative repressive aspects is the result of Gandhi's ambivalent attitude of submission and revulsion towards the family.

Readers may anticipate here that the family situation in Gandhi's household is being identified with the Western family which was Freud's model. I am aware, however, that such an attempt would be unreal and misleading. The Freudian family model is one in which the Father and the Brothers are supposed to be competing for the possession of the female of the herd. In the Hindu joint family, the situation is different and the aggressive competition is eliminated and a 'harmony' is established.

But this 'harmony' is achieved at the cost of the freedom of the individual. Everyone, male and female, old and young, in the joint family is subjected to a 'role' and compelled to perform the prescribed 'duties' and 'rituals'. There is hardly any distinction between moral duties and ritualistic duties. So even when we accept the obvious and significant disparities between the Freudian family model and the Hindu joint family, we must not be blind to the repressive character of the latter. The repression exists in an extended form in the Hindu caste system and even in its larger concept of a 'society of castes' governed by a king, strictly following the ritualistic duties of an ideal Hindu king.

Let us now return to the concrete situation in 1889 within and around the Gandhi household in Rajkot. First within the family, the patriarch (Gandhi's father) is already an ailing man stripped of all his power and authority, humiliated by the ruler and the British Political Agent, and awaiting his end. He was depending on the services of his wife and sons for nursing and small comforts. The wife Putalabai, 58 years of age, is the real authority in the household. The sons are too young, Mohan is a child of 13, and his brothers are 15 and 21, respectively. His sister Raliat is 19 and, having been widowed in childhood, had come to live in the Gandhi household. The wife of Mohan, Kasturba, is 13 and his brothers' wives may be about 15 or a little younger.

When the father died in 1885, the situation is not materially changed. The matronly widow Putalabai becomes now the sole authority and rules over it firmly and with strict orthodoxy. The three sons, the widowed daughter and the two young daughters-in-law belong to an age-group ranging from 16 to 25. The generation gap is very wide, and what is more, the gap between old and new ideas is a widening and agonizing chasm.

This household situation has almost all the elements in which the young sons must have felt cramped and crushed. We have no record of how Kalidas reacted to it. But it seems that he soon left Rajkot for Porbander where he worked as a treasurer to the Rana of Porbander.

Karsandas and later Mohan both were friendly with a Muslim boy, whose house was just opposite the Gandhi household. Sheikh Mehtab has been described as a tempter, the 'evil' influence on the life of the two Gandhi boys. Looking to his power of seduction, and his success in corrupting the boys, one feels that Mehtab was a strangely powerful person. But his success points to another aspect of the events. Karsandas and Mohan could not be seduced if they were happy inside the household. Both were married and were not starved of sex; in fact, they were rather too young for initiation in sex. They belonged to a fairly prosperous family with a reputation and status in Rajkot. They are, however, desperate and disturbed, as adolescents. Smoking, meat eating, stealing, and visits to brothels are desperate symptoms of young minds, which are driven to defiance of authority.

The authority of the elders in a joint family is absolute, but it also has two serious flaws: (1) The patriarch or matron, who rules the household, is stripped of his or her lustre as the person fails in material and bodily vigour. Serious and prolonged illness of Gandhi's father presented a horrifying and also pitiful picture, a pathetic shadow of departed power and authority, and (2) the authoritative commands of elders, either obeyed in fear or respect and love, have an amoral character.

While the first flaw has universal validity, the second flaw has more or less significance relative to the dynamism of the

social system. In the Hindu society in Rajkot, there were both internal and external impulses for a questioning and doubting attitude. The system was in transition and was under stress. Elderly commands took upon an amoral character when elders were questioned by the young. Mohan's questions to his mother regarding the polluting touch of Uka, the untouchable, and regarding the efficacy of the touch of a Muslim in removing the pollution caused by Uka, gives us an example of what explosive power innocent doubts could possess.

The death of his father brought the stress to an unbearable intensity in Mohan's mind. Much has been made of Mohan's absence from his father on his death-bed; Gandhi himself attached to this circumstance an extraordinary significance, interpreting it as an act of guilt of lustful behaviour. But the circumstances do not bear out such an interpretation. Mohan left his father's bed-side, because Mohan's uncle who used to have his bed near his father's bed had relieved him. The uncle must have asked him to take rest after a long ordeal of vigil at the bed-side of his old father. It was natural for Mohan to go to his room and disturb the young sleeping wife. Within five minutes, the father's condition took a sudden turn for the worst, and he died. A servant was asked by the uncle to break the sad news to Mohan.

The whole thing appears quite normal, and one wonders why Gandhi has interpreted his behaviour as lustful. The plain fact of normal inconsolable grief has been transformed into a moral sermon and, as I read in the Autobiogaphy, the chapter 'My Father's Death and my Double Shame', I was struck with its emotional chilliness and dramatic moralizing.

What happened to Gandhi's mind was perhaps a cold and fearful shock; what he recalled later at the age of 55 was some details of the death event. But he could not outgrow the shock, which threw him into panic and horror. I would attribute the shock to young Mohan's confrontation with death—the death of his dear father, who was for him the source of all protection, authority and love. The death deprived Mohan of the only meaningful authority that he had feared since his childhood.

Mohan was in panic because the dead body of his father was the concrete symbol of the ultimate absurdity of life.

This event has a significance only because, after his father's death, Mohan deeply felt the vacuum, the meaningless efforts and puerile achievement of men. But, even as he was deeply shocked, his search began. His young mind tried to probe and find some anchor. Elderly commands and the love and protection bestowed upon the young by elders had ended. There was Mother. But she was only capable of love. The wife was ignorant and only evoked lust (so Mohan seems to have thought).

The Gandhi household, like any Hindu patriarchal family, was a protective womb, an enclosure in which individuals do not achieve a strong sense of moral independence. Protective strength, the virtue of the joint family, is also its repressive flaw. Gandhi would have overcome the shock of his father's death in a way normal to members of such families, but, even as a raw youth, he had started on his search to find his selfhood, his truth. This was because the shock was both severe and destructive. It created a vacuum, which could only be filled with a question mark. If wealth, status, authority and commanding love and tradition are all so perishable, if death can rob everything, what is meaningful in life? Is life worth living?

This question is the root of a moral conscience and of that 'religion' which ultimately Gandhi was to live throughout his long life.

Gandhi family was not only assailed from within but also from without. The rulers of native states, on whom the past glory of the Gandhi household depended, were already reduced to puppets. (Gandhi's wrath against the puppets was later to burst forth into his 'scandalous' speech in Benares, in 1916.) The sacred Haveli had no sanctity in Gandhi's eyes. The educated reformers, pleaders and teachers alike, were unworthy of respect. People belonging to the Hindu, Muslim and Parsi faiths continued to profess their religions, but Mohan thought that they were without any real religion. Stripped of all these false trappings was the living virile figure of his friend Sheikh

Mehtab. But he was a devil, though a tempting devil.

It was, therefore, a veritable chaos that surrounded the beleaguered Gandhi family. After the father's death, the family could give Mohan little protection. Mother would dote on him, the wife would share his bed, others would love him as of old. But nothing could fill the vacuum.

Such a situation may only crush a young mind, or lead it into conventional puritanical life, or push it into a depraved life of wasteful abandon. The innate greatness of Gandhi lies in this that he had the strength to refuse to tread any of these alternative paths. But he had no path to follow.

His eager and prompt decision to leave the family for a far off place was thus an escape, and also a naive decision to make the start for a real search.

Many young people, in that decade, seem to have 'escaped' in a similar fashion. Some went into the Himalayas in search of *gurus,* some entered secret patriotic groups; some merely wandered and returned as 'prodigal sons' to settle down to some conventional routine and family life. Gandhi's escape to London was fortunate, because he met there sober men of thought who were critical of Western civilization, men of moral seriousness and open-minded rebellion. A raw youth from Rajkot without knowledge of India's past and present, who had lived on the fringe of the sorrow and awakening of contemporary India, met with the kindness of idealists who were British but had rebelled against the 'materialism' of West. During his stay in London from 1888 to 1891, Gandhi regained his balance and acquired moral earnestness. More than that, he found that there was no 'given' truth, and one had to search for one's own truth, one's own authentic life-style.

7

Truth and Non-Violence

The Context of Choice in Respect of Violence

Gandhi was later faced with the same issues in their vast dimensions. The issues of imperialist aggression, of social oppression, and of mass poverty were issues that common men in Asia and Africa have been facing in the modern period. Leaders of thought and action, men who have led classes and nations into struggles, have commonly faced the fact of aggression and evolved methods of fighting it. Ever since the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, which enslaved the whole of mankind into markets, empires, and wars, there has been a feverish search for the emancipation of men from violent aggression and exploitation of men by a minority. From Rousseau to Marx and from Lenin to Mao the search for 'peaceful existence' is going on, with success and setbacks. Ranade and later on Gokhale, Tilak, and Gandhi are within this stream of thought and action which characterizes the history of these two centuries.

This is what makes the issue of violence and non-violence so central to Gandhian thinking. In this context alone, Gandhi's real contribution to world thought can be properly assessed. The issues of non-violence and satyagraha can be divorce from this historical context and may be discussed at the metaphysical level or at the level of religious speculation. But essentially

non-violence is no other than the issue of 'peaceful existence' for all mankind.

Before we enter into a discussion of the specific nature of Gandhi's concept of non-violence, we may digress into a general consideration of the problem. What is violence? And what is the content of non-violence or the method of non-violent struggle? Does violence only mean bloodshed? And is all bloodshed violent? Is 'violence' another name for the law of Nature, known popularly as the law of the survival of the fittest? Can the weak protect themselves, if they are attacked by violent aggressors?

These are some of the vexed questions round which present day academic discussions on this subject usually revolve. We may, at least for the time being, ignore such questions. Let us digress and see what is meant by violence (and non-violence) in terms of *human activity*. Obviously, many acts of violence, committed individually or collectively, with the approval of current social norms, are not judged as violent. Exploitation of labour and murder in war are examples that are far too familiar to us. In ancient and medieval societies violence was legitimate and even obligatory; as for instance, war was the 'dharma' of the kshatriya. Conversely, non-violent behaviour was either approved of or censured, judged only by current social norms.

Is it then possible to say that violent (and peaceful) behaviour is fully analysable, both in its factual and moral dimensions, in the context of current social activity and its norms? And can we say that since social systems change and ever-new norms are evolved, the judgement about violence must remain tentative and relative?

Alternatively, is it possible to say, as Gandhi and many others did, that violent behaviour is unworthy of human beings in any human situation or social system? And can we assume tacitly that violence is contrary to human nature? This assumption may be held, as Gandhi did with his belief in the spiritual or divine self of man, or it may be held to be true even by an atheist and a Marxist who may believe, that peaceful activity and behaviour are the only species character of humans.

We may find ourselves in difficulties if we accept either of

the alternatives outlined above. Either way, we get committed to a specific view of 'human nature'.

If we accept the first view, we commit ourselves to the doctrine that human nature is initially unstructured and plastic. There is no abstract, fixed, and immutable human nature, but 'that human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations.'

This view is held by many environmentalists and Marxists. It is, moreover, the view held by all persons who are engaged in educational or social welfare work and by social reformers and revolutionaries. Successes achieved in all such social fields provide a vindication of the environmentalist assumption.

But it may also be noted that persons with thoroughly reactionary ideologies and practices have also held this view with equal conviction. Ancient rituals and imitations were based on moulding a person into a prescribed job and status in a static framework. Indoctrination and persuasion through mass media in contemporary societies are also based on the assumption that human nature is unstructured and malleable, and can be conditioned into any desirable shape.

The alternative view offered by Gandhi is based on an assumption that human nature is dual or split. It is not plastic but there are two non-plastic selves: The animal self and the 'pure', 'true', or 'inner' self. The pair exists in juxtaposition and in mutual rivalry for control over the motivations of individuals and social groups.

Since we are concerned with the problem of violence, as it is manifest in overt social activities of men, we may safely reject the hypothesis of violence being alien to the 'true' nature of human. Known history and evidences from the pre-literate past of mankind show that social activity of humans was violent. Contemporary events only underscore this aspect of human nature.

A third alternative exists. We need not commit ourselves to the myths of the environmentalists or of those who affirm the 'good and bad selves' in man. We may reject the view that human nature is perfectly plastic, and equally we may decline

to accept the view of a 'split' human nature.

We may accept the view that observations on the intrinsic structure of our mind show that the acquisition of knowledge of language and of beliefs is possible for us humans only because we have a unique 'species character'. In human social activity, growth of moral consciousness and the capacity to participate in a free community is not only possible for all individuals but that is the most intrinsic need of our nature. Chomsky concluded his address, quoted above, with the remark that a man can create a new social reality, a 'Scientific civilization that reason can create'. He says that 'passions and instincts of men need not lead, as it led Russell, to pessimism. . . .' These passions and instincts may yet succeed in bringing to a close what Marx called the 'prehistory of human society. No longer repressed and distorted by competitive and authoritarian social structures, these passions and instincts may set the stage for a new scientific civilization in which man's animal nature is transcended and his human nature can truly flourish' .

Chomsky refers above to 'passions and instincts', which an environmentalist will reject as 'myths', while a Gandhian would say that they belong 'to animal nature' and have to be repressed and eliminated.

The Essential Ambivalence in the Relationship between Man and Nature and between Man and Society

Human contact with Nature is not passive. Men do not live 'in nature' as other animals mostly do. Animals react to Nature, but do not attempt to change it, nor do they try to understand it. In brief, there is something in the human contact with Nature, which may be called 'confrontation'. If we say that animal response to Nature is submissive, we may be justified in saying that this confrontation is aggressive.

It is recorded that Thoreau 'like St. Francis,... could almost talk to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air'. This may be called Thoreau's achievement in his attempt to live *in* nature. This can well be understood as the violent revulsion of a

sensitive soul to the ruthless exploitative aggression against Nature that characterised the attitude of men bred and brought up in the climate of the Industrial Revolution. But Thoreau's attitude to Nature is not the normal attitude of the human species. This point is well brought out by the following remark: 'Because of his skilled observation and his careful recording of the phenomenon of nature, he has been considered a great naturalist; but he lacked the perspective and objectivity of the true scientist.'

What distinguishes the attitude of the scientist from that of Thoreau is the element of 'confrontation in the scientist's perspective. He asks questions to Nature and does not remain immersed in the quiescence of the Nature-mystic.

At this stage, we may profitably discuss the place of 'violence' in human nature, as it expresses itself in social human activity and human contact with the rest of Nature. (We may add here that, though the perspective of the artist is not the same as that of the scientist, it is not one of quiescence. The artist also asks questions, but these are different from those asked by the scientist. The mystical attitude, wither of Thoreau or of others with whom we are familiar in Indian culture, is one of hushed silence, and no questions are asked.)

Now the attitude towards nature, which is characteristic of the human species, is that which is revealed in the scientific and aesthetic activity of mankind. The exploitative attitude is not human but one conditioned and fostered by bourgeois materaialism and greed, while the quiescent attitude is of the rebel who tries to escape the bourgeois world and voices his idealist protest against bourgeois greed.

As we have said earlier, the intrinsic human attitude towards Nature is one of confrontation. Man asks questions to Nature. At the core of this confrontation, there is an implicit but firm faith in nature, the hope that human questions will be answered. It is this faith in the co-operative response of nature that characterise the unique quality of the confrontation. One may use figurative language and say that there is a 'dialogue' between Man and Nature, and human activity fruifully achieves

a 'consensus' in the form of scientific discovery and creation of a work of art. Each consensus is, however, a stimulus for further dialogue which has no end.

That human activity is a 'dialogue' is a concept which we shall later employ to throw light on the problem of violence. But, before we proceed to that, let us probe into relations which underlie all human social activity. These relations have assumed varied concrete forms under different economic social systems. The slave-system in ancient (and even contemporary India) or the bourgeois system in the contemporary world are an illustration of concrete and therefore limited aspects of human relationships. Can we posit some relationship which is not so limited? In other words, can we escape the flux of concrete social systems? Will it be possible to do so without committing the mistake of positing a 'myth' about a social human relationship?

We think that we can avoid myth-making, if we hold fast to the reality that men are what they make of themselves in concrete social activity. Yet we may probe below the surface of the flux of changing social forms, and gain some valuable insights into the 'species character' of humans.

Language-activity and sex-activity are two examples of human social activities, in which probing below the flux is feasible. Play-activity and labour-activity are also amenable to such probing. Of courage, these and in fact all activities, in the very nature of things, are social and therefore not only tainted but conditioned by the prevailing social norms. Thus, language, sex, play, and labour are all commercialized and exploited in contemporary society. But we may at least think of each of these activities in their uncorrupted residue, in their essence as human activities. This residue is neither the activity of the lonely free individual nor of the faceless robot in an Orweliian totalitarian hell.

If we look into the nature of this *residue,* we find that there is 'confrontation and co-operation', 'conflict and consensus', in all human activity. There is a 'dialogue', a mutuality. But this mutuality has a specific human character, which has relevance

to the issues of violence and non-violence.

Mutuality in human activity has a built-in tension between opposing impulses. In play, for instance, vigorous antagonism between the contestants is as much integral to the fullness of play as is their respect and concern for each other. We cannot conceive of good game either between sworn enemies or between persons who cannot bear fighting with each other for winning the game. In either case the game becomes either war or exhibition of a phoney contest.

Human mutuality is thus not simple togetherness, but a dialectical complex of ambivalent attitudes resolving themselves into social human activities like games, labour, or sex. This ambivalence leads to symbolization or symbolized forms of activity. Language, for instance, is thus not simple communication, as between animals, but a highly complex communication through symbols, which can either facilitate or block mutual understanding between humans.

The nature of human ambivalence in human sex is analysed, in the context of Gandhi's life-style by Ericson. Ericson, with his deep psychoanalytic insight coupled with concern with the social dimensions of such an insight, rightly criticised Gandhi in his relationship with his wife and children—his own and other children as well.

I would like here to quote Ericson for an observation he has made on the mutuality of sex as a human activity. He says, 'And here is the point, not once, in all your writings, do you grant that a sexual relationship could be characterized by what we call 'mutuality'. This is by no means a capacity easily developed or sustained without self-control and sacrifice, but as an approximation and a goal, it describes the only kind of sexual relationship in which the other person does not become a mere object', for I am not so delusioned as to think that there is any healthy sexual relationship in which there is not also a reciprocal sadism for the sake of satisfying such desires 'on' each other as are usually expressed in four-letter words; nor is there a healthy sexuality which does not also include a certain pleasure in the closeness of the sexual function to the evacuative

organs and their modes. The point is that mutual consent and artful interplay truly disarm what debasement and what violence there is in merely taking sexual possession of one other.

In this analysis of sexual relationship, Ericson has described the ambivalence intrinsic to the activity of the partners: along with pleasure, there is 'mutual consent', as well as reciprocal sadism. Ericson has shown, with adequate evidence, that Gandhi had a lopsided view of sex and equated it to lust. Which is another name for aggressive sadism. We shall come to this aspect of Gandhi's personality in relation to his childhood and adolescent development in a traditional Hindu joint family. We shall only add that the lopsidedness of the view on sexual relationship, which exaggerates the single element of mutual consent or a surrender and love of the partners to each other, is patent, if we agree with Ericson that the relationship is a complex of reciprocal sadism and consent, of mutual possession and surrender.

Let us now pass on to the question of the operation of this reciprocity or mutuality in the institutionalized social activities of humans. Here also men are motivated by opposite impulses. Ambivalence becomes the pattern for social activity. At the two extreme limits of the spectrum of ambivalent behaviour, say, in a family or in a caste, we have those individuals who act in a non-ambivalent way, some act like rebels aggressively and others act in the spirit of conformity to the accepted norms. But the rest are ambivalent and make continuous shifts and adjustment with the stability of the institutional framework.

As long as the framework is adequate and strong enough to accommodate the economic, social and cultural life of the persons within the framework, the ambivalent impulses are also adjusted and find an equilibrium. The equilibrium may be most unjust and repressive as it certainly was in traditional societies, in which the poor and women were repressed. Even then, the equilibrium was tolerated, even willingly accepted, by them. Even today, we find that the concept of a revolutionary change in institutional life is not welcome to a majority of people, and this constitutes the major psychological weapon of the

privileged minority in maintaining their status.

The ambivalence, however, begins to assume serious and explosive intensity when any particular institution begins to weaken and lose its elasticity and strength. This may happen due to extraneous causes, but in many cases the framework begins to break down due to internal stresses. In fact, both external and internal factors continue to loosen the frame.

At such a juncture, the issue that confronts all is: how to change the set-up? The ambivalence, implicit in all human relationships and activities, now brings into play the two opposing impulses of aggression and consensus.

It is here that Gandhi's non-violence has its roots. We must look upon Gandhi's total life as a continuum, from his childhood in the Gandhi family and his subsequent maturation through the encounters in South Africa and India. Then his concept and technique of non-violence will appear to have its roots in the concrete human situations (i.e., institutional frameworks) in which he had to live. The alternative view would be to ascribe to him either a superhuman charismatic personality or to consider that he was inspired with the idea of satyagraha in consequence of his reading the *Bhagavad Gita* or the 'Sermon on the Mount'. That Gandhi had the genius and greatness of evolving a 'new principle', nobody need deny. But a principle is never discovered in books, it has its roots in the very soil, in the human situations in which a genius is born and nurtured. In the case of Gandhi, the Hindu joint household of the Gandhis was the first soil, and later on the caste system, the racial conflict in South Africa and the national struggle in India were the nurturing grounds for Gandhi's non-violence.

The Hindu Metaphysical Tradition and Gandhi's Conception of Truth

Gandhi believed in and practised a unique set of ideas and ideals. If we compare them with those of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors, we find significant differences. But though unique, Gandhi's belief-system has roots and affiliations. This is but natural. No authentic thinker lives in a

vacuum; he accepts his cultural heritage and contemporary influences. Uniqueness and originality lie in the significant manner in which the creative person unifies the past and the present.

To develop further this approach, let us take the following estimation of Gandhi's philosophy:

Gandhi's philosophy is a continuation of the Indian philosophical tradition which has come down to us from the Vedas, the *Upanishads,* the *Gita,* Jainisim and Buddhism. And it could not be otherwise, for though Gandhi spent most of the formative period of his life in England and South Africa, he had his roots in Hindu culture. With all his criticism of Hindu faith, his sympathetic understanding of other religions and also the persuasions and temptations for conversion, Gandhi never wavered from the basic Hindu tenets....Every revival of idealism in India has traced its ancestry to the Upanishadic teachings. The *Bhagawad Gita,* the Vedantic philosophy, and the nineteenth century Indian Renaissance are major examples of it. There is no wonder therefore if the *Upanishadas* form the foundation of Gandhi's thought in the twentieth century.

Further the same author, at the conclusion of his valuable book, says:

'Gandhi's metaphysical position as summarized above has nothing unique or original about it. This is the central position taken by Indian philosophy in general. It is therefore futile to search for the foundation of Gandhi's thought in philosophies other than in Indian philosophy. The *Upanishada,* the Yoga Sutras, the *Bhagawad Gita,* Jainism and Buddhism are the chief sources of Gandhi's philosophical ideas. He is merely a follower of a great tradition.

'This, however, does not underrate the Western impact on Gandhi's thought. It should never be forgotten that Gandhi has translated Ruskin and Plato and quotes Thoreau, admires Mazzini, reads Edward Carpenter and that he is, in short, familiar with the best that Europe and America have produced. Gandhi himself admits, 'I have but endeavoured to follow Tolstoi, Ruskin, Thoreau, Emerson and other writers besides the

masters of Indian Philosophy'. Notwithstanding Gandhi's acquaintance with Western thought, one, however, feels that its influence upon his philosophy is not foundational but only confirmatory. Moreover, this influence is more prominent in Gandhi's social thinking than in his metaphysical views.... The similarity can be traced to the fact that both Gandhi and Emerson have drunk deep from the common fountain of Indian philosophy.

'Gandhi's philosophy is thus nothing but a continuation of Indian philosophical thought. Born in the resurgent India of the latter half of the nineteenth century, Gandhi imbibes the main philosophical emphases of the renaissance—Unity of Godhead, and oneness of humanity, importance of the phenomenal world of relative truths and concern for suffering humanity, combination of individual salvation with social welfare and toleration towards different creeds, revolt against pernicious conventions and application of age-old truths of Hindu scriptures to practical life'.

I have given a rather long quotation from Verma, because I feel that it does full justice to Verma's point of view, but at the same time, raises certain questions which, I feel, are relevant to a proper understanding of Gandhi's world-view, as well as of his life-activity.

One may ask: What is meant by the 'main philosophical emphases of the renaissance in the latter half of the nineteenth century?' Verma has fortunately listed these 'emphases' in the concluding part of the above quotation. Now, if these 'emphases' are taken together, as an integral whole, as a world-view conducive to a particular life-style, does the world-view appear continuous with the Indian traditional world-view?

I see a gulf, a break with tradition. The world-view of the early pioneers of Bengal renaissance, and that of the later thinkers, who worked in Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab and in the southern regions, were created in opposition, firstly, to the militant Christian missionaries and thinkers, and secondly to the Hindu traditionalists. Here we need not go into

the details of the transition from the early (pre-1850) world-view and its later developments. But, taken together, the renaissance world-views were not in smooth continuation either with Hindu tradition or with the Christian tradition. They were new in their content and their 'force'—'force' to give a new orientation to the way people reasoned, imagined, and acted.

Here, I take up a remark made by Verma in regard to the influences of the West on Gandhi's mind. He says that these influences were 'not foundational but confirmatory'. I fully agree with this characterization. But, then what can we say about the traditional influences? Can we not say that they too were only confirmatory?

Let us take the case of 'Truth'. In the ordinary routine life of the people, truthfulness was regarded as a virtue. Most people lived in village communities, and theirs was what may be called face-to-face relationship. Custom was law. Under these rural conditions, resort to falsehood was bound to be marginal. Falsehood could be practised marginally and could be dealt with speedily and also leniently.

There was one area of social behaviour in which the temptation, one may almost say the necessity, to resort to falsehood was great. It was in the field of political power, diplomacy, and war. Here the Hindu tradition provides two distinct standards: (1) The model of the king, who observes the duties of a king prescribed by Kautilya, and (2) The model of mythical kings, like Rama and Harischandra, who were prepared to observe truth at all costs.

Now, apart from this popular, courtly, and mythical aspects of truth (as truthful conduct), the Indian traditional philosophy had a concept of truth, which has two divergent aspects. The term 'sat' has two meanings: (1) 'sat' is enduring existence, as opposed to the existence of perishable things, e.g., 'brahma satyam, jagat mithya' is an aphorism in which only this existential meaning of 'sat' is valid, (2) 'sat' is moral good. This ethical meaning of 'sat' is valid in such words as 'satkarma', 'sat-achara', i.e., moral behaviour.

The existential and moral meanings of 'sat' are divergent,

but they may be said to be vitally linked together in an identity if one accepts the traditional view that changing, phenomenal things are morally evil, while permanent entities are morally good.

Thus far, we have discussed how Truth is viewed in popular and philosophical contexts in the Hindu tradition.

Gandhi's concept of Truth is neither the popular custom-oriented concept of simple truthfulness, nor is it based on the identification of existential and moral truth. His Truth is just the human striving for moral good. Gandhi links human existence with human moral effort and identifies the two aspects only at the human level. This is fundamental to his concept of truth.

But Gandhi also felt the need for some confirmatory aspects. These reinforcements Gandhi derives from Hindu tradition as well as from traditional Christian and other religions. Gandhi 'confirms' his own concept of Truth by referring to the myths of Prahlad, Rama, and Harishchandra, and also by referring to 'sat' as enduring existence, as the eternal divine moral Law.

The Problem of 'Religion' for the 19th Century Thinkers

We have already seen how Gandhi at first firmly believed in God as a Moral Governor and subsequently came to believe that the human search for moral perfection is all that can be posited about God. This transition is at the basis of his reversal of the axiom 'God is Truth' into 'Truth is God'. Also it explains his refusal to Nirmalkumar Bose to prove the existence of God by any arguments.

The problem of God, or religion, was real and vital to Gandhi. And his solution of it must be fully understood in its concrete historical context. As I have attempted later to link Gandhi's religious thought with that of Ranade, this context of modern Indian religious history will show that the issue is not confined to God, but covers the entire problem of human existence, of nature, and of change both in human society and in

Nature. The problem of purpose and of morality is central to all the thinking implicit in Ranade's and Gandhi's religious speculation.

Before going into the historical context, I would pose the 'religious' question in its modern aspect. This will reveal the bearing of the historical discussion on contemporary issues. Moreover, it will facilitate our understanding of the issues faced by Ranade and Gandhi, because we shall see the similarity between contemporary and past speculations.

Today we discuss man's alienation, the anguish and dread of existence, the crisis of identity, among other things. Our minds are paralyzed with pain and fear when Nixon is re-elected by the vote of millions, and he continues the most barbarous war of modern times. We stand in dumb surprise and pride, witnessing the heroism of the people of Vietnam. The problems of morality and evil, of hope and courage crowd in our minds. Where is all this leading? Science and technology present us with problems, which man does not seem to be powerful enough to solve. But this conclusion is challenged by ideologies of revolution. Marxism stands against religion and negative pacifism. But the communist States fight with one another, and seem to be following the law of force, self-preservation and bourgeois diplomacy and bureaucratism.

This is just a loose and superficial description of the mental stresses and storms that are today agitating the minds of older and younger persons in all countries.

Now it is my plea that, if we visualize the *total* social scene in India and particularly in Western India by about 1870, we shall find the causes of the traumatic experiences impelling sensitive and energetic minds to question traditional and newly acquainted values, morals, and beliefs, and also to build up new 'religious' belief-systems.

Moreover, it is also a matter of significance, and one may say of historical coincidence, that round about 1870 the bourgeois value-system built during the previous century—'The Age of Reason'—had crumbled. The bourgeois world-view had shown its brutality and moral void, and this traumatic

experience had given birth to new ways of reasoning and imagining.

The confrontation between Britain and India during the period 1757-1857, that is, during the period in which Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1833) laid the foundation of the renaissance in Bengal, was one of co-operation between British bourgeois liberals and Benthamites and Indian social reformers and radicals, say, between Bentham, Lord Bentinck and Ram Mohan Roy.

In contrast, the period that succeeded was one of doubt and conflict, both in Britain and in India. J.S. Mill (1806-73) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) are two persons whose works influenced this period in Britain, America and India.

The book *Three Essays on Religion* by J.S. Mill was published in 1874 soon after his death in 1873. In 1882, the Principal of the Deccan College, Poona, Selby, introduced the main ideas of the book to his students, in the form of two pamphlets. Ranade severely criticised Selby in an article written in the Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha. This is one instance of how the ideas of Mill and Spencer, as also of other European authors, were introduced to the Indian elite, and Ranade's prompt and forceful reaction to Selby's pamphlets shows how Indian leaders of the period were vigilant about the effect of 'foreign ideas' on the minds of our young generation.

Gandhi's Coming to Terms with Vedanta

'There are some things which are known only to oneself and one's Maker', says Gandhi. 'These are clearly incommunicable. The experiments I am about to relate are not such. But they are spiritual, or rather moral; for the essence of religion is morality. But for me truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God . . . .

'But I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him . . . . But as long as I have not

realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it, that relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler.'

As I consulted Gandhi's Gujarati original, I found that there are some discrepancies between the original and the English translation quoted above, and they are in a sense material for understanding the main emphasis of the author. In the Gjuarati original, Gandhi says: "there are some things which are only known to the Atman and go to rest in the Atman. But such things are beyond my power to know. In my experiments 'adhyatmika' means 'moral'; religion is morality."

It will be noted that the word 'Atman', used twice by Gandhi, cannot be rendered into 'oneself and one's Maker'. The translator has in mind the Christian dualism between the 'soul' of man and God the maker. Gandhi is using the term 'Atman' in a pantheistic (or monistic) context. The 'Atman' is held to be identical with 'Brahma', which is 'Satya', Jnana and Ananta. As such the 'Atman' is all-knowing and also the repository in which all things (even all knowledge) are funded back.

It is, therefore, only correct for Gandhi to say that such things as are knowable only to the 'Atman' are beyond the finite powers of the individual self (Jiva-atman, as distinct from the Atman).

Here, I notice a transition, a pause, which Gandhi has not explicitly stated, but which one can decipher. Gandhi used the word 'Atman' which has a strict traditional meaning, within the framework of the monistic Vedantic doctrine of Shankaracharya. In Hindu religious parlance, this unique use of the word Atman is permissible only in the 'adhyatmika' way of speaking and thinking. (In ordinary parlance, however, the word Atman is used just to indicate the individual self, but this is a non-adhyatmika use of the word.)

Gandhi became aware of this ambiguous use of the word 'Atman', and that made him pause and ponder. He realised that he has wandered into a region of Vedantic doctrine, and has loosened his firm foothold on his experiments done by him as a human being living with other human beings.

So he retreats hastily but firmly from the region of Vedantic 'adhyatma', which is primarily a religious doctrine or system. He keeps, however, the links with the adhyatma, which he had accepted in using the term 'Atman'. But he also effects a break with the doctrine by emphatically asserting that, for him, 'adhyatmika' means 'moral'. Further he affirms that religion is morality.

There is an urgency and force of personal commitment in these affirmations. Gandhi is trying here to disentangle himself from Vedantic 'adhyatma' which has, however, an unbreakable spell over him.

Before we comment on this involvement of Gandhi in the context of the general spiritual ethos of the modern Hindu elite, let us proceed to analyse the text quoted above.

After affirming that Truth is a sovereign and all-embracing principle, Gandhi says: "this truth is not 'sthula'" (i.e., gross). This word again is the antonym of 'sukshma' (i.e., subtle) and both the words belong to Vedantic doctrine. Gandhi is again entering into the region of the doctrine. He says: 'This truth is not gross, it is not the verbal truth'. He then makes a statement like this: 'It (this truth) is the truth of speech and equally the truth of thought.'

The following affirmations of Gandhi do not link up smoothly with the statement quoted above. There is a break, a fracture in the thought-stream which the translator has missed. He, therefore, goes on into a smooth long sentence.

We shall render a literal translation of the next separate sentence: 'This truth is certainly not the truth that we conceive, but it is self-determined (sva-tantra), eternal Truth; which means it is no other than God.'

In other words, Gandhi is now affirming the 'subtle' (sukshma), non-subjective truth of Vedantic doctrine. In this context this 'sukshma' Truth is the 'Brahma', which is objective (the Vedantic term is 'vastu-tantra' as opposed to 'purusha-tantra' or human subjective). The Truth is 'sva-tantra' and eternal, and Gandhi could easily identify it with God. (God and Brahma were often identified in Hindu theological thought.)

We shall now proceed to the third paragraph in the quotation. It begins with the problem of defining God. Gandhi speaks reverently of the many vibhuti's of God. This echoes the famous 'vibhuti-yoga' chapter of the Gita. Gandhi does not, however, rest with this traditional polytheistic conception of manifold embodiments of God. He again makes a break with tradition and speaks thus:

'But I am a worshipper only of God in the form of Truth.'

Then follows a full statement, which the translator has omitted. It runs as follows: 'This and this alone is true ('satya') and everything else is false ('mithya').' It will be noted that, in this sentence, the words 'satya' and 'mithya' are used as adjectives and as mutual antonyms, echoing the famous Vedantic aphorism 'brahma satyam', 'jagat mithya'.

But the earlier identification of 'satya' (used as a noun) and God continued in the mind of Gandhi. There is an ambivalence, which allows him to say, 'I have yet not found it, but I am a seeker after it.' Here the translator has given an unwarranted interpretation by changing 'satya' into 'God', on the strength, of course, of the identification earlier referred to.

The final part of the quotation should not engage our attention. This can be literally rendered as follows: '. . . But so long as I have not directly experienced ('sakshatkar') this truth, till then that which my inner self ('antaratman') counts as true, that which is only conceived by me as true, will be counted by me as support, my beacon, as the foundation for the course of my life.'

In the above, the word 'antaratman' is of crucial importance. It is to be noted that Gandhi avoids here the word 'Atman', for a good reason. He is avoiding Vedantic overtones, and is referring to the 'moral conscience' of finite man. It is the 'inner voice' of which Gandhi spoke on many occasions. The word 'antaratman' also has a Vedantic overtone, because this term is often used to differentiate the jivatman (or finite self) from the 'Atman', which latter is identified with the 'Antaratman'.

But here Gandhi is not ambivalent. He unmistakably refers to the finite truth which can be grasped by a finite mind, and boldly asserts that we, as finite human beings, must chart our voyage with this compass, as our only guide. Here Gandhi appears a humble seeker of human truth, as distinguished from eternal Truth sought by ancient seekers of Moksha, Nirvana or the eternal Bliss of Brahma-jnana.

Non-Violence and Morality

Expediency dictated the same course as morality.

This remark reveals a unique pattern in most human situations. *Practice* demands that all actions, even moral actions, should have a meaningful chance to achieve their desired ends or results. A moral action which is foredoomed to failure in this sense cannot be recommended even on moral grounds. For instance, take the calf-killing incident in the Sabarmati Ashram. Gandhi could not agree with those who thought that such killing would be 'himsa'. But, let us assume that there was a surgeon, who affirmed that despite the severe injuries, the calf could be treated back to normal life. Gandhi may have listened to the surgeon and if he were to be convinced of the ability of this surgeon to save the life of the calf, he would not have taken the step of killing it.

What was then involved in the incident is simple. It was not *moral* to abstain from killing the calf, simply because there was hardly any chance of saving its life. Non-killing would have been moral, but the life of the calf could not be spared.

So Gandhi thought that killing the calf was *expedient*, the only course to avert not death but the agony of the calf. Gandhi, therefore, took the expedient course, and rejected the foredoomed (as if) 'moral' action proposed by others. Which really means that moral actions have to be judged not by actual results but by *probable* results.

One finds Gandhi has spoken of permissible 'violence' in certain cases. There expediency (not opportunism but calculations about anticipated results) plays a decisive role. Expediency and morality tend to concur.

8

Faith as a Basis for Action

The Crisis of Faith in the West and in India

This is a sphere of mental activity, which is crucial both to understand the situation and to understand Gandhi.

The net result of the religious crisis which started in 1820 was that the traditional religious (and metaphysical) roots were disturbed. In fact, there was an uprooting of traditional modes of religious thinking.

In a very radical sense, what got uprooted was:

(1) the certainty of religious truth, and
(2) the vital link between moral and religious truths.

The whole struggle of the Indian pioneers on the level of religious consciousness was somehow to regain a foothold on these lost value-supports. It was a heroic but also pathetic struggle.

Here the context of European religious crisis must not be lost sight of. Pre-Hegelian and post-Hegelian attempts to regain the religious foothold show a plethora of similar heroic-pathetic attempts. Attempts of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and the later existentialists like Sartre, Camus and Jaspers and the fierce theological internal struggles to face the human situation

authentically bear witness to the human situation that was bound to engulf the thinkers of Maharashtra. It is here only a question of a totally different 'time' and 'space', but what faced all these great men of the 1850-1920 period was a modern human dilemma—or the religious crisis in the age of science. (or Reason!)

The Indian intellectuals as a whole (and the Maharashtra pioneers in particular) faced the crisis in a way which may be called 'holding the fort'. They often sallied forth and attacked the encircling enemy (new problems, new doubts, and new norms were attacked). They engaged in some skirmishes, but soon retired into the safety of the fort. But, as has happened in the case of famous sieges, the garrison was always faced with the problems of supplies in the fort and weaknesses in the defensive mechanism of the fort.

As will be argued in detail later, with historical evidence from the writings of Maharashtra pioneers, the battle was lost and the fort proved to be vulnerable. We were left in open. Truth lost its traditional *certainty* and Truth became a faith (in the sense in which Kierkegaard used the term 'faith').

Secondly, moral truth lost its traditional karma-based framework (which again had a *certainty* and viability in the traditional concrete social and personal situations). The divorce between moral and religious truths was completed and became irrevocable.

The situation was, however, 'saved' by an illusory retreat to a vanished fort. A new humanism, a new God, and a new concept of moral truth were all rolled into a new 'equilibrium', which was, however, unstable. In this, we were neither better nor worse than the Europeans, who were facing similar, if not the same, predicament.

The equilibrium was illusory, and the anguish was suppressed in the rising tide of a passion, the passion for national freedom.

A precarious and exhausting moral-religious crisis was gripping the Western nations. With the advance of science, coupled with the hedonistic life-style of bourgeois culture,

human life lost its inner dignity both in peace and in war. War as an institution, showed the utter degradation of man, but peace was no better. While this crisis was deepening in Europe and the Americas, the incidence of the same was delayed in colonial countries enslaved by the Europeans. In Asia as a whole and in the Indian subcontinent in particular, the total human crisis was not felt directly. Instead, the Western crisis was seen through the spectacles of nationalism. The patriotic passion gave our pioneers a substitute for the deeply-felt moral and religious urges, so there was no vacuum.

In this unique situation lie the roots of the strength and weakness of Indian moral, religious thought of the pioneers. They were shielded from the deepening crisis in the total human situation. Patriotism provided both the *purpose* (the objective or project on which they could concentrate and lead to activity) and also the *quasi-moral value-status* to the purpose. (The proof of this assertion lies in the fact that since 1947, the moral crisis has shown its impact in the moral and religious anarchy that grips the elite and the people of our country).

From "God is Truth" to "Truth is God"

Nirmalkumar Bose confessed that he had never thought much about believing in God, though he thought he believed in truth.

This confession is candid and is typical of the attitude of a modern enlightened Hindu towards God. Bose does not affirm either theism or atheism. He bypasses the issue. He had 'never thought much about believing in God', which may be interpreted as follows: Bose does not discuss the problem of the existence of God; he only thinks about 'belief in God' which is a subjective phenomenon. He recognises the fact that most people believe in God. But then he reports that he had never thought much about this faith. He does not condemn this faith, as an atheist would, but he politely remarks that 'faith in God' means very little and does not tell you much about the worth of the believer as a human being.

The matter is different when it comes to truth. Bose said 'he

thought he believed in truth'. Now this is a personal self-commitment. Bose now does not say anything about other people's faith. He is committing himself to 'belief in truth'. There is a hint of vacillation in Bose's expression. That is not, however, a flaw in the commitment, which is firm. It is the natural hesitation of a modest man, who knows how difficult it is for man, frail and finite as he is, to believe in truth.

To believe in God is easy; at least that is how men have been believing in God—in a lazy, indifferent manner. To believe in truth is difficult. There is nothing tangible; no stone idol or mental image of truth helps the believer. In fact 'truth' becomes everybody's search, a path, and nothing more.

The following words of Bose, recorded by the the B.B.C., bring out the full significance of the commitment to truth, which guided Bose's and Gandhi's life:

> He (Gandhi) asked me: "Do you believe in truth, do you?" I said: "Of course, I do." And he said: "that will do. Are you prepared to suffer for truth?" I said : "Don't know if I'm prepared for it, but I quite agree that a man who stands by what he holds to be true should be prepared also to suffer for it." And then he said: "That will do. That is enough." And from that day onwards we lived together. I attended all his prayer-meetings except one or two I missed, and quite apart from that after two or three months' time, one day I asked him: "Bapu, why don't you talk to me about God? You ought to try and convince me that God exists." And he smiled and said: "Do you know, I think I have a firm faith in God. I am not quite sure about it but I try to live accordingly and if my life doesn't carry that message to you, the word of my mouth will never succeed, so I don't try."

This conversation between Bose and Gandhi is beautiful and also delicate, Bose had teased Gandhi, challenged him to a verbal duel. The undertone of his question is reverent but teasing agnosticism. Gandhi has caught the point, but refuses to join issue in a sort of argumentative debate. As we know,

Gandhi spurned elite-level debates. Gandhi seeks to clarify his own position in a serious tone. He affirms his faith in God, but does not try to justify it or lay evidence for the existence of God. In fact, he says 'I am not quite sure about it'. Does he mean that he is not sure about his firm faith? Or does he mean that he is not sure about 'it'—that is, the existence of God.

What Gandhi clearly states and what he is telling Bose is that he is 'trying to live accordingly'.

We may draw two conclusions from this conversation for which we are indebted to Bose. Gandhi had a 'firm faith in God' and that the only worthwhile evidence he had about the existence of God was the evidence of his own life lived in the service of man. In this Gandhi differs from other people who think that the existence of God can be proved with the quoting of scriptures, miracles, revelations or 'spiritual' experiences and utterances of yogis and others.

Incidentally, this conversation may provide a clue about his conversion from 'God is Truth' to that of 'Truth is God'. The earlier faith reflects his firm belief in the existence of God, which may be ascribed to his strong attachment of tradition, a theist tradition, His conversion to 'Truth is God' reflects a new orientation. Existence of God is not now axiomatic. Instead, truth exists as something to pursue as a life-line which one must hold on to as the life is sinking in a void. This truth Gandhi now elevates to the existence of Godhood. Godliness becomes an attribute which Gandhi confers upon truth.

It is this new orientation that enables Gandhi to leave the mind open to genuine friendship with atheists like Gora and Bose. Gandhi's conversations with Gora and with Bose reveal the open-mindness of Gandhi as a new type of theist. The traditional theist will have no dialogue either with atheists or with sceptics.

Faith and Doubt

It is difficult to obtain a balance between faith and culture as two guidelines in action. Young persons with urge and vigour are rightly prone to faith and action. They suspect that faith

leads to inaction. In a young culture also this suspicion becomes strong. The early pioneers of the Indian Renaissance were naturally men of faith and rejected doubt. 'Confessions' of this life like faith and activities based on faith were the ruling faithful ('Confession' is to communicate one's personal faith to others, the confessor is the group of the 'faithful').

These pioneers, men of faith, were confronted with traditional faiths (religious and philosophical 'systems') and also with non-Indian systems. They were also confronted with science as a 'system' (and therefore a faith in Nature, natural laws, history as 'Man's Nature', Reason as man's instrument of knowledge).

Men of faith moved in two directions: (1) building a synthesis of all faiths and (2) withdrawing to 'faith only in oneself'. A third alternative was to fix one's faith authentically or dubiously, in some one traditional faith. A fourth alternative was to become men of no-faith or to become 'faith-less' under cover of pseudo-faith, paying 'false' homage to the *Gita*, the *Koran*, the Vedas or Vedanta, etc.

One aspect of this faith-situation is of serious import for the present study. There was a growing tendency to denigration of doubt, which meant rejection of critical and historical reflection of faith. A doctrine of self-sufficiency of faith was accepted. A feeling of 'insecurity', of the 'danger of inaction', inhibited reflection. Reflection is 'suspending action' and hence was feared. In fact, for reflection was substituted either: (1) meditation to strengthen one's faith and/or (2) action to test one's faith. Experience was all. It could, it was held, show one the way to a critical appraisal and correction if needed of one's faith. But this experience was one's own experience, in meditation or activity, one's own testing of faith. It is not realized that one's own experience is usually bound to be corroborative of one's own faith. Secondly, one's own experience or activity cannot be critical or provide a test of one's faith. Criticism and test of faith must have the foundation of doubt, and must bring the experience and activity of others, along with one's own, to bear on the validity or otherwise of the faith.

These faith-activities were the Pioneers' 'styles' of living and these prevented them from a reflective, objective linking of their own lives with their immediate historical pasts, their roots and 'steps of growth'. They almost always linked themselves to Vedic past, Ramraj, or at best the protestant Renaissance in Maharashtra.

This explains Gandhi's attitude to gurus. The term 'guru' has a highly technical sense in the Hindu religious tradition. If one accepts a guru, one wholly absorbs his faith, surrendering critical attitudes. The 'testing' of that faith, through activity, is not permissible. Gandhi's use of the term 'guru' in the context of Raichand and Gokhale has nothing of this traditional content. It is in that sense an empty term, its use, however, is significant. It is overtly used to indicate Gandhi's respect for these two persons. But it also ironically indicates that, unlike Westernized elites, he is not ashamed of having 'gurus'. (Such deliberate attempt of Gandhi to mark himself off, even as an antagonist from his educated elite predecessors and contemporaries, is born of Gandhi's unshaken self-confidence as a new prophet-leader of the masses. This is a version of Tilak's vision of himself as a scholar-hero-leader of the educated and the masses.)

Apart from this guru-complex, Gandhi has no urge to link up his own development with his predecessors. He deals with his own personality as if it grew in a vacuum, a wilderness and a moral desert. His childhood and boyhood experiences are described by him in the *Autobiography* in this 'personal' fashion. (For instance, from his account we do not gain any insight into the Pranami faith of his mother. He just hints at the moral decay in the Vaisnavite temple, but does not give details. The reformers in Rajkot are mentioned, but the reader is allowed to form an opinion of their views and activities from the dubiously 'representative' figure of Shaikh Mehtab, the boy who corrupted him). This is unfair to the reformers, but is in line with Gandhi's contempt for elites.

In the *Autobiography* and in his conversations, Gandhi remains totally 'himself', an 'island', a lonely man who firmly

believes that a reformer must not attempt any intimacy with persons whom he wants to reform. Gandhi wanted to be a reformer, not piecemeal but whole, not of a group but of the whole of mankind. (This 'Total Man' theme recurred in all pioneers, like Vishnubua (1865), Ranade (1896), Vivekanand, Dayanand, Phule, and of great thinkers and leaders in Europe; men like Owen, Marx, Mill, Ruskin, Tolstoi, Lenin, Darwin, and Freud had this 'total' theme at the root of their scientific academic and social revolutionary outlook.)

The significance of the 'Total Man' concept is obvious, in the alternative moods of dogma and tolerance, which pervade their life-styles.

This urge of a 'reformer of mankind', coupled with the urge to avoid intimacy, is bound to result in 'loneliness' as a persistent subjective mood, and in indifference to (which is, in fact, the avoidance of intimacy with) mankind in its concrete historical growth and present existence. This is not harshness or lack of human sympathy. On the contrary, it is 'Karuna'. The distinction between 'Karuna' and 'intimacy' can be understood best by reflecting on Gandhi's pet words like 'lust', 'anasakti', 'brahamacharya'; these words are vaguely but aptly indicative of the 'distance' felt by Gandhi between himself as a 'reformer' and 'mankind', the men and women he wanted to reform. [Ranade may be said to have conceived of his faith in God as the 'distance', but also the mediating entity which keeps him in contact and still separate from his fellow-beings. Gandhi has almost absorbed the 'God' of Ranade (whose existence was 'out there in the beyond') into his (Gandhi's) own being. In a sense, this absorption destroys the bridge-like role of God, and leads to a more severe alienation from mankind. This alienation is symbolized in the concept of 'Lust', Anasakti', etc., and also in the hyperbolic emphasis on 'love' that Gandhi feels for others].

This brings me to some of my attempts to learn more about Gandhi from some of his associates. I met them (Nana Dharmadhikari on 14-11-72, Dada Dharmadhikari on 6-12-72 and Nathji on 12-12-72) in the hope that they might shed some light on Gandhi's ideas and total thought-process; I told them

that Gandhi's Autobiography was opaque and dark, so far as links with other thinkers and with his own thought-maturation was concerned.

The general impression that these men conveyed to me was that Gandhi never entered into discussions on such matters. They also seemed to feel that such discussions were elite futilities in which Gandhi never indulged. (Gandhi has himself said that what one thinks, reads, or discusses must have the quality of being tested in a concrete experiment. If it lacks this quality, it is like tasty food with no nutritious value, and therefore the slightest indulgence in it is lustful and voluptuous.)

Gandhi discouraged such 'discussions', politely snubbing persons like say Nirmalkumar Bose, who ventured to ask him about theism, atheism and such other topics. Only, Gora could have some substantial conversation with him but that may be attributed to the modesty and tenacity of Gora, who is not just a member of the atheistic elite, but an ardent worker in Gandhi's Gramodyoga field and is even now an active Sarvodaya worker.

I must note also that those whom I met, shared Gandhi's disapproval of 'voluptuous' indulgence in idle academic thought-climate in which he matured appeared to them irrelevant in two ways: (1) They felt that such a historical approach was not worth the trouble, as it would at best unveil some historical links between Gandhi's thought and that of his predecessors like Gokhale and Ranade, and (2) they felt uneasy about the approach, because the study may lead me into false over-interpretations of Gandhi's thoughts. I may fall into the trap of importing a consistency, a systematic wholeness and coherence into Gandhi's thought. They felt that such an attempt would be doing violence to the living essence and dynamism of the Gandhian mode of thinking. Historical links were particularly not in their ways of understanding Gandhi.

I could not share their pessimism about my approach. I could only assure them that I was not myself in any way committed to the philosophical or ethical systems of any of Gandhi's predecessors or contemporaries. I am not interested in

unravelling the links with pioneers of the Maharashtra Renaissance, just because I happen to be a Maharashtrian. Nor am I infatuated with the historical approach because I am a student of Hegel and Marx.

I told them that we all know that Gandhi had a prophet-like personality and, therefore, nobody could expect to find a smooth maturing process and historical roots in Gandhi's world view and activities. It is true that the roots, if at all we so call them, of Gandhi's life are spread out from Rajkot to London and Durban, and Durban to Benares, Naukhali and Delhi. The whole world is the stage on which he acted out his part and will continue to influence thought only through his action and ideas.

But even a prophet must be understood, both as a person and a human being, and also as a teacher and an active participant in human drama. And understanding is linking, probing. One cannot think of a person in a social vacuum. The only care one can hope to take is to keep the approach 'non-violent', i.e., one must move as cautiously as one would when approaching a delicately woven cobweb, with intricate design of tensions, stability, and functional beauty.

Satyagraha

I have so far emphasised the prophet-like, lonely aspect of Gandhi. It will give the impression, that Gandhi was a person with a closed mind and an autocrat. Such an impression would be entirely wrong. Gandhi frequently sought advice from Nathji, and may be from others. In the deliberations, at various levels and with varied types of persons, he was responsive and co-operative, one may say, almost to a fault. He worked as a member of the group in which he happened to be. But all along in such group work he remained himself alone. Bargaining with benevolence and courtesy, he would not stoop to bargain as a *'bania'*. This is why he teasingly called himself a *bania,* implying thereby that he could see through the bargaining in which others tried to involve him.

As a prophet he was disinterested in gain or in any credit. If he won in an encounter, he would say that the credit belonged

to all participants which means that he included also the 'enemy' whom he opposed in the sharing of the credit. He discarded the words 'passive resistance' (and 'civil disobedience'). Resistance implies an outside opposition, an evil force. Disobedience also can only mean defiance of a law or behest from outside. Whether one's fight is 'passive' or 'civil', it is with an opponent who must be neutralised, and not 'destroyed'.

Satyagraha is resolution of a conflict or tension, a restoration of peace, and not a fight. The premises are radically different.

The premise at the root of satyagraha is a commonwealth of men of different races and countries. The British Empire was a commonwealth, spread over India, parts of Africa and with its centre in Britain. Some men in Britain were thinking as liberal utopians and believing in the equality of all men. Justice was the foundation of the Empire, so thought many.

Gandhi only enlarged the horizon of this utopia. He visualized a utopia, inclusive of all mankind in this commonwealth. (Such an all-inclusive utopia was also the dream of Marx, who envisaged a state of communism for all mankind. In the tradition of European economic, political, and philosophical awareness, Marx conceived a means for socio-political and economic institutional transformations. But the premise, at the farthest end, was again a peaceful commonwealth of mankind.)

The commonwealth premise of Gandhi was conceived on the basis of his awareness of the total unarmed condition of vast masses of Indians and Africans dominated by armed Europeans. The masses were men potentially as heroic as the armed Europeans. But a direct fight, an armed insurrection was unthinkable for Gandhi. It is not a question of courage. Gandhi had courage to die and kill, as so many occasions have shown. (The killing was of a calf in pain, and of a serpent. He also approved of the killing of pests and animals destroying crops in the field. In Kashmir, he also sanctioned a defensive war, involving the killing of enemy troops.)

Satyagraha, then, is a resolution of tensions between men, belonging to a commonwealth. Concretely, the tension may be located in an African colony, in a textile enterprise, in the Champaran tea gardens, but in the tension, in so far as it involves only men as participants in it, a resolution is possible.

Here an aspect of the premise (of satyagraha) must be stated. It is usually not even mentioned in this context. Gandhi himself is silent over it or, one may say, emphasizes other aspects so exaggeratedly as to bury this aspect into oblivion. Why should one hope that a tension amongst human beings, or within a human commonwealth, can lead itself to a resolution?

Here the assumption is that because all men are reasonable in the end, or rational at the core, human tensions can be resolved by Satyagraha therapy. The therapy is not just an invocation of the rationality of man. It means an elaborate procedure, which is essentially non-violent because it cannot work unless limits are accepted by the 'doctor and the patient' (that is, by the human group under tension and the therapist who helps the group to normalize itself).

(Ericson has rightly observed that there is a striking and deep resemblance between psychotherapy and satyagraha.)

The belief in a commonwealth and also in a 'therapy' based on the co-operation of rational men, who have only temporarily become irrational and brought about a tension within a human group, is at the base of satyagraha.

Now both these assumptions, taken separately and in conjunction, are peculiar to what we may call 'Indian liberalism', Ranade, and also Bankim Chandra, Vivekanand, Tagore and others who may be called the pioneers, who gave shape and content to this liberal world view. It is not just a political stance, it is a whole philosophy of life. It is based on a certain vision of man, the quality of human life and modes of human activity.

The Core of Gandhi's Faith

Various passages from Gandhi's Autobiography outline a belief-system, a faith one may say, which has sustained Gandhi

through his life of toil, doubts, and convictions, his moments of great power and hope and of the deepest despair and helplessness. The political and social conditions which aroused Gandhi to small and momentous activities were important in their own way; but they did not deflect his beliefs nor did they modify the core of his faith.

We should, therefore, fix our attention on this core. Two ways of understanding it have been tried here: (1) to define the faith-system of Gandhi and compare it with traditional as well as modern faiths, and (2) to search for the sources or roots of Gandhi's faith. In anticipation, we may remark at the outset that Gandhi's faith-system is essentially unlike any traditional Hindu and non-Hindu systems, and it may be considered to be somewhat similar to the system of modern theistic existentialists. Secondly, we may expect to find the roots of Gandhi's faith in the religious and philosophical speculations of Ranade, Gokhale, and Tilak.

First, let us see the Gandhian faith in its full contours:

(1) Gandhi is a theist. He firmly believes in one God, and does not believe in a pantheon of deities.

(2) Moreover, God's existence is not accepted by him on any authority. In Hindu and non-Hindu theology, the existence of God is accepted on scriptural or revelatory authority. For Gandhi, God exists because he personally believes in him.

(3) Gandhi holds that the world exists. He also believes that it is an orderly world, or that 'Laws of Nature' hold true in the behaviour of worldly things.

(4) But he believes that there is a higher order, which is Divine. The natural order is subordinate to the Divine order.

(5) Gandhi holds that the Divine order is a moral order.

(6) Gandhi believes that every human being, intrinsically and intuitively, is aware of this moral order. This moral awareness is the foundation of man's awareness of the existence of God, whose power sustains the moral order.

(7) Awareness of the moral order is equal in all human beings. But the awareness becomes feeble due to indulgence in pleasures, and grows strong by abstinence in them. It is, therefore, the duty of man to practise abstinence in order to enhance his awareness of the moral order.

(8) Man should engage actively every moment of his life in the pursuit of moral life. This pursuit is the search for truth. This search is the only true way to happiness. It is also the true way towards the goal of God-realization.

(9) Gandhi believes that man's nature is dual: there is awareness of the moral order (which order is Divine and perfect), and also there is the human weakness to accept pleasures, get tempted by immorality and remain deaf to one's inner voice, which is only awareness of morality.

(10) It is Gandhi's basic faith that the practice of moral life is only possible for the individual in co-operation with other human beings and not in isolation. Gandhi affirms that such cooperation, essentially in the pursuit of morality, can be based only on love. Ahimsa is the name of this basic law of love, which Gandhi thinks should govern all human affairs, and also should govern the relations of men to other living beings.

It will be seen that this system of belief is an enclosure. It has no open ends. (One may add that a 'faith' must have this quality of self-sufficiency. Faith cannot have loose or open ends. Philosophy, on the other hand, necessarily has open ends and an open texture. This conflict between Faith and Philosophy is of vital importance; but, throughout the history of human speculative activity and practical life, this conflict had either remained unseen or has been obscured.)

Ambivalence in the Concept of Nature

Gandhi's contact with Raichand hardened an early, tradition-given divorce between Nature and God. The divorce between body and mind (Atman) was inherent in Indian (Hindu, as well as, Muslim, Jain, etc.) tradition. This was further

reinforced by Gandhi's Christian contacts.

A strange Janus-like, double-headed concept of Nature runs like a red thread in Gandhi's thought and practice. On the one hand, he rejected all natural impulses, activities, relationships, etc., as lust. On the other, he tried to live with Nature as in Nature.

Gandhi's rejection of sex, good food, ornamentation, etc., is an attempt to purify the body and thus make it a bare instrument of the pure soul. But he swung then to the other extreme—nakedness, innocence of the child, etc., are to be adored as natural.

His Hindu tradition could not afford him a foothold. Nature as reality (neither an in-human or anti-human temptress, nor a 'mother' for the human 'child') becomes a friend of the 'Whole Man'. If we try to split Man into body and soul, instrument and divine purpose, slave and master, we destroy the very concept of the 'Whole Man', and reject the actuality on which any such concept of man can rest.

Gandhi's concept of Nature was dichotomous and led to a continuous and hurtful conflict. He often attained the feeling of a hero, who had subdued Nature; at other times, he succumbed to the helpless feeling of an infant seeking the warmth of a woman's motherly embrace.

Ranade's concept of Nature was not so split. He believed in the 'Whole Man', the 'Total Man'. But the germ of body-soul dualism is to be detected in his theistic emphasis on human will. It is, however, only a germ. His positive attitude to Butler's theology and to an attempted analogy between natural and revealed morality shows where Ranade stood. It was a threshold. A step more and we reach the dichotomy of Gandhi. Tilak's position is in a contrary way nearer to Gandhi's.

9

Gandhian Feminist Ethic

The question I want to raise is, What shall we do with religion? It is there. It tugs at women; often it hurts them. Its powers are on the increase, especially in the newly liberated countries. Religion both unites and divides the world. At times it seems that religion is immutable—enormous, difficult to manage, frightening, and yet influential, since each of the religious traditions claims some ancient, deep and sanctified root. We must find a way into religion and out of it, because traditions of religion are powerful and because women's lives are interwoven with them. I am using "religion" here in the wider sense, that is in the sense of deeply held values, which would include traditional values, social values and cultural values.

Thus it is that we must ask not only what religion can do for women, but more importantly: what can women do with religion? In other words, how can women use religious traditions and values to their advantage? How can we meet traditional values half-way, so that the tradition can help change society?

Women all over the world, and especially in the developing countries, have been the primary bearers of religious and cultural traditions. Some may give negative reasons for this, i.e., that women are motivated to resort to tradition by fear,

superstition, ignorance, or lack of power. However, we also find studies suggesting that women, speaking in general now, tend to be more sensitive to moral or ethical questions, more responsible and responsive to human needs, and less dominating in relationships. The evidence for such a psychological assessment comes from a wide range of research and writing. It also comes from looking at the kinds of issues in which women participate, in great numbers and with great commitment.

For example, the majority of those who take part in peace movements and are activists in non-violence seem to be women. In India and elsewhere, women have come out in large numbers against particular injustices, such as the confiscation of land, the shooting of dissenters, the cutting down of forests, etc. Providing security has been so much a part of women's historical experience that it has become a part of women's ethic: to care.

Is there some connection between these characteristics of women and their attachment to tradition? Most religious traditions do talk of spirit, some in norms of goodness, such as honesty, compassion and the universality of mankind and womankind. It is also true that religious organisations have tended to become alternative sources of power, and have often perpetuated discrimination and inequalities. Is it possible that the religious valuation of compassion, in some way, has "touched" women more than the religious valuation of power?

Against this background of question, I would like to look at the linkages between that aspect of Hindu thought which stresses individual autonomy leading to self-realisation; Gandhi's stress on self-reliance and self-control; and the universally recognised foundation for women's liberation, namely, autonomy, a sense of one's own self. In all, autonomy is a positive value. Hindu thought sees its spiritual content; Gandhian thought underlines its social content, i.e., the fact that self-reliance and autonomy do not mean isolation of the individual, or individualism, but rather, autonomy and self-reliance linked to the family and society. Women's thought

points to its global possibilities as an element in a universal ethic for women.

The Need for a Global Vision

The first step for women is to identify goals, and then to draw out of the fabric of religious tradition, those threads that seem strongest to use in creating the society we seek. But what are these goals? Are they common to all women, or must they be culture, religion, class, race specific? Is there a kind of feminism which can be a universal ideology for women, or must there be several feminisms?

It is too easy to say that feminism is both universal and group specific. It is also too easy to say that feminism is completely group, religion, or culture specific and that the issues of women and religion will have to be approached independently, in each tradition, with no common denominators. What is more difficult, but to my mind more important, is to accept the challenge of identifying a critical core which is universal to all women, and then mark out the boundary areas which may be different.

Let us take the Indian case, with reference to the Hindu Code Bill, for example. The women's movement in pre-Independence India wanted a general civil code which would apply to all religions. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, a leader of the movement in pre-Independence India, put it this way: "There is one thing these brilliant Indian women have done, and that is to show in their own personalities how alert their respective organisations are, and how little of substance there is in the English delusion that Indian life must continue on a Communal Basis; in fact, it was ever so ordered. Hindu, Muslim and Christian on the same platform, colleagues and comrades pleading the same cause, demanding a common citizenship so that a true national spirit may develop and woman may take her full share of civic responsibility, make a deep impression." Kamaladevi goes on to record the dismay among these women when, in fact, separate civil codes were granted, especially due to the pressure of conservative religious

groups. Thus, today in India, Muslim women have a different civil code from the Hindus. The voice heard most loudly continue to be those of religious leaders, primarily conservative men. And today, the voices of women raised to support a universal civil code, are few. Even women's groups are sometimes reluctant to press the issue, lest they be accused of communal aggression.

If certain issues can be identified as impinging on all women irrespective of religion, then it would be possible to overcome this accusation. Indeed, in pre-Independence India, the women leaders did have a common ideology, and persisted with it when designing their demands. Today, however, there is no common platform, hence articulation becomes "culture specific" with all the divergent and divisive elements of such splintering.

The history of the civil code issue in India illustrates the point that women, coming from particular religious or traditional structures, *can* help each other by bringing out and exchanging the most advantageous aspects of each of their cultures, but we can do so only if certain goals and aims, issues and strategies, are identified as common to all women.

In essence, I think that most religious traditions are *liberating*. Fundamentally, through religious traditions men and women free themselves of mental and physical bondage, and find spiritual illumination. Such illumination provides a kind of liberation, a release, from the earth. In this respect, religious traditions are remarkably similar. It is in the *establishment* of structures of religion, however, that religious traditions have become distinguished, one from another. What we must find, therefore, are the dynamics of liberation within each tradition which move people beyond the establishment into freedom.

Contributions from India: Toward a "Gandhian Feminism"

As in most societies in the world, in India there is a tradition of group singing and dancing, especially by women. The singing can be directly religious as, for example, the singing of

bhajans, or hymns. But the singing can also be merely suggestive of religion, as in the case of folk music, theatre, or dance. Villages and neighbourhoods often have what are called *bhajan mandalis,* "circles of song singing," in which women gather to sing *bhajans,* either informally or in a more institutionalised way.

Such *bhajan mandalis* are a live and strong form of women's grouping among Hindus in India today. It is an important fact that SEWA, the Self-Employed Women's Association in Ahmedabad, used the *bhajan mandalis* as an entry point to get to know the poor self-employed workers of Ahmedabad. SEWA extension workers joined the *bhajan* groups, sang with them, had discussions after the *bhajans* were over, and thus introduced themselves into the neighbourhoods where working women lived.

After this introduction, the SEWA workers were able to do a household survey on the economic condition of these women workers. They then could analyse the survey, discuss it with the group at any *bhajan* session, and enable the women to find a course of action. The women themselves then went into action, and, as is well known, formed a larger and larger association.

Bhajans continue in SEWA today. In fact, every meeting of SEWA, whether at the level of the extension workers or at mass meetings, begins and ends with the singing of *bhajans*. This is consistent not only with the women's culture of SEWA workers, but also with Gandhi's style of collectivity. And SEWA, of course, springs from Gandhian roots.

It is well known that Gandhi always began his day, his meetings, his fasts and his activities with prayers in the form of song. Such prayers included many Hindu *bhajans,* such as the familiar *"Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram."* Other prayers were Muslim or Sikh in origin. They communicated the message of solidarity, equality and the universality of religion. Gandhian ashrams, such as Radha Bhatt's Lakshmi Ashram, continue this tradition; SEWA has drawn upon this tradition as well, bringing women from the *bhajan mandalis* into trade unionism.

A further illustration of the indirect use of religion for social

change also comes from Gandhi and what, in a tentative way, might be called "Gandhian Feminism". My comments here emerge from three workshops with 15-25 women involved in various forms of Gandhian "constructive work". The first workshop laid bare, in very poignant terms, how the philosophy of Gandhi had drawn these women away from conventional roles in class, caste and family and into activist work in Gandhian social institutions. And yet, even within the movement, they were sometimes inconvenienced, subordinated, and even harassed by men who shared their own ideological framework.

Each of these Gandhian women revealed how from childhood, she had shown her difference from the rest of her family in wanting to respond to poverty, misery, injustice and inequality. Sometimes this was expressed by teaching neighbouring slum children; by sharing food with others stealthily; even by leaving home and joining a Gandhian ashram community. Later, there were struggles for education, for choice of partner in marriage, or for the choice not to marry and lead the life of a social non-conformist.

In adulthood most of the women present were workers of one kind or another in Gandhian institutions. Here they experienced the usual tensions between domestic and professional roles, usually with men who expected women to first fulfil their domestic responsibilities. They also experienced the criticism that they were "over-playing" the "women's issue". It was even suggested to them that there was no such issue in Indian society.

Looking back, while these women could see a common thread in their struggles as women, they could also recognise that in some important ways they were not interested in joining the more vocal sex-based "women's movements" in India. They were still primarily motivated by Gandhian issues, giving priority to the poorest of the poor.

One such issue is that of the treatment of untouchables, or Harijans, the "children of God", as Gandhi called them—those castes which had been "outcasted" by the caste system on the

basis of their ritual "impurity". During the freedom struggle, Gandhi had taken the line that the Harijans should be integrated into Hindu society, and therefore no separate identification, socially or politically, should be made. Gandhi felt that if special reservations of seats or positions were made for them as "handicaps" to help overcome their historical deprivation, they would always remain stigmatised. He believed in an appeal to caste Hindus to open their minds and hearts to embrace all colours, castes and creeds and to shed the discriminatory perception of the Harijans.

Gandhi also attempted to change the reason for the stigma, which was that untouchables engaged in impure and odious tasks: carrying night soil, flaying animals and working with leather. He insisted that work may be odious, but people are never impure. Therefore he demanded that every Gandhian worker clean his or her own toilet. In the ashrams, the workers themselves cleaned the night soil, not only of the villagers, but of the castes which were employed to do so!

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, an untouchable colleague of Gandhi, had a different view. He felt that these castes, which came to be called "scheduled castes", would never attain equality unless they had asserted themselves separately. Indian policy today uses positive discrimination in favour of the scheduled castes and tribes, so that they are given both identity and privileges in exchange for revealing that identity. These privileges have created the basis for a new, positive self-consciousnsess.

This debate between those who see separatism as an obstacle to equality and those who see separatism as a means of attaining equality has some universal dimensions. The Black power movement made blackness, which had been the basis of stigma, a positive value and made a bid for solidarity on the basis of blackness. This made mobilisation across class lines more possible than it had been in the integration movement.

However, in the Gandhian Women's Workshop in Bangalore, the women were united in their support of the Gandhian view, especially with regard to the Harijans or scheduled castes. Caste is different from race or gender, in that it

does not carry a visible mark, but the policies of separatism retain artificial barriers, and their attendant stigmas, within the community.

At the workshop, Radha Bhatt described, for example, how such policies hurt the homogeneity of Lakshmi Ashram. When the Inspector of Schools used to visit the school, he wanted to check how many children there were from these stigmatised castes, to make certain that the scholarships or grants given to her school for these children were being properly used. These girls hated to be identified as scheduled. In fact, they found the school a haven of peace precisely because they did not have to carry with them the caste tensions of their village, and could see themselves as part of one unified community. During the inspection, the scheduled caste girls broke down in front of the Inspector. As a result, Radha Bhatt has come to refuse these special grants in aid, so that she would never again have to make those children stand up and expose themselves.

While the Gandhian women at the workshop appreciated both aspects of the issues, there was agreement with Gandhi's view, which emphasises the "means" to equality, not just the "end". It is this that might be described as the basis of Gandhian feminism: an insistence on the means, rather than the ends alone. Durable achievements demand dedication to the method, the process of revolution. If the means, the methods, build on human goodness, then a genuine change of attitude and durable results can be achieved.

The Gandhian presupposition here is that man is essentially good, not nasty and brutish as some philosophers would have us think, nor born with original sin. The human soul is part of the infinite soul, the Brahman, and is already linked to the divine. All that is required is to foster and stimulate these basic, and good, impulses.

Another example of an emeerging spirit of Gandhian women's work is also from the area around Lakshmi Ashram. Khirakot is a village down the hill from Kausani in the hills near Almora. Several years ago, an enterprising man from outside the village started to quarry limestone from a deposit in the hills

near Khirakot. To carry it to the road, he had to pass through the outskirts of Khirakot and cross the fields, crossing several times the narrow footpaths which are used by the people of the village whenever they go to cultivate their fields, to bring water, or to fetch fuel and fodder for the cattle. The man initially transported these limestone loads by human labour. He found the business so remunerative that he decided to set up a power-mill. The mill, in turn, had a capacity which demanded much larger volumes of stone from the quarry. This led to the use of donkeys as pack animals. Convoys of donkeys used to go from the quarry to the road, occupying the narrow footpaths used by the local population, especially the women.

Initially, the villagers accepted the man's activity with their usual tolerance. If a man could find a good source of livelihood, they should not stand in the way. However, as his activities increased, the women found they sometimes had to stand for hours with heavy loads on their heads, waiting for the donkeys to pass, as the narrow paths could be used by only one person or animal at a time. Also, the outsiders were a threat to the community, since many young girls had to go to school using the same paths. The women decided the man's packing must stop.

They appealed to the men of the village, who claimed that they had talked to the miner and that he had refused their request: he had permission from the government for quarrying, he said. The women then tried to obstruct the pack trains by narrowing the footpaths so that the donkeys could not walk on them. The miner responded by registering a case in court against the women's obstruction. But the women intensified their obstruction by physically occupying the paths. The miner further increased his protest through the courts.

The men were ready to give up, as they could not see themselves fighting a legal battle. There was no money for litigation, they said, and they could not see the legality of their case, as the miner was supported by the government in his activity. But the women would not accept this position. They insisted that the case be fought on the grounds of trespass and

causing public nuisance. They raised the money from their own resources and savings, and fought the case for nearly two years until they won, and the digging at the quarry stopped.

The success of such resistance fired the self-confidence of the community and made women assume leadership roles. It brought other women into the movement. The village has now decided to replant the quarry with trees. They see their resistance to this kind of destruction of the environment as part of their movement to preserve the ecology of the Himalayas. The Chipko Movement of the wider Himalayan hills area had already given the people some idea of the power of resistance, for by "hugging the trees" ordinary women and men were able to halt the spread of deforestation.

Another example of this kind of experience is that of the women of Kumarikatta in Assam. Here, some tribals had long occupied an area of land and were cultivating it. Periodically, the legality of their claim upon the land was questioned and initiatives were taken to evict them. Each time, somebody had intervened on their behalf, and the status quo continued. One time, however, the intervention failed. The authorities went so far as to give notice of eviction and arrange for a herd of elephants to trample down the huts of the tribals.

The elephants came, and the tribal village people gathered outside the huts. There were moments of tense silence and stillness. The social workers who were working with the tribals could see no way of protecting the "squatters". It seemed inevitable that the finale would have its own momentum.

Suddenly, without any previous discussion, the women rushed forward out of the crowd of those to be evicted and embraced the trunks and legs of the elephants, constantly chanting the prayers that they usually chant on the particular *puja* day for the worship of the elephant God, Ganesha. It is customary on that day for women to rub sandal paste, *kumkum* and flowers on the elephants and to stroke them with devotion. The women now imitated the same ritual, with full ceremony. The elephants seemed to respond in turn, by refusing to advance, accepting this worship with their conventional grace.

No one—neither the authorities, nor the social workers, nor the male squatters—could do anything. The elephants turned back, and the tribals returned to their huts.

Both these episodes illustrate the ability of women, not only to identify their common problems, but to perceive a common solution, which usually involves steely courage, great risk and the conviction of the non-violent method. All that seemed necessary in these situations was a link to some source of self-confidence. The women needed simply to recognize their own inner strength—they did not need to be told how to organise, or how to overcome their difficulties. They seemed simply to need this crucial link to Gandhiji's philosophy of non-violent action. Such a life-line is provided by the work and inspiration of institutions like Lakshmi Ashram. Both the knowledge of what needs to be done and the power to do it are already there. The outside worker needs only to become an insider—to be with the people, as Gandhian workers are, for example, in the *padyatras,* the "walking journeys" they take through the hill villages. The communication of love, care and interest is precisely the life-line, the mobilising force, that such villagers need.

Love as a central value is common to many religious traditions, but the Vaishnava tradition of Gandhi's family adds to love a certain earthliness. In this love, life is not rejected but embraced. Simplicity in consumption is not based upon self-denial, which makes for a harsh puritanism, but for the one who lives, with others, in the world, as did Gandhi.

Gandhi's this-worldly approach to revolution was especially appropriate to women's experience. He demonstrated this during India's freedom struggle. Women were significant participants in economic struggles—the boycott of foreign goods, such as textiles, and the Salt March. Women took the message of the spinning wheel seriously. Even today, at the Gandhian women's workshops, the *message* of *khadi,* as distinct from simply the *commerce* of *khadi,* is a real commitment. For women in the Independence Movement, spinning meant self-reliance, and identification with the unskilled and unemployed.

In their biobraphies, many women leaders of pre-Independence India have described how Gandhi's call to *satyagraha* (literally "truth force"), opened the door to them for their own liberation from oppressive social modes. The code of his ashrams included simplicity in dress and reverence for women. The rules of the ashrams made it possible for women to "come out" of the narrow worlds of their homes to participate in a wider community.

In a sense, Gandhi met the Indian tradition half way. He directed it away from its establishment "structures" and toward its changing "dynamics". It was just this capacity to meet the tradition half way that facilitated the emergence of women from the grip of the orthodox tradition. However "reformist" or "middle-path" such an approach may seem, it is tactically effective, because it provides vehicles and options for change.

Toward a Feminist Ethic

Where do we go from here? In this section we will try to knit, rather loosely, the experience of women into a possible ethic, derived largely from Hindu thought as interpreted by Gandhi. The growing documentation on women worldwide—our economic roles, our behaviour, our attitudes, our aspirations—has begun to reveal some interesting facts.

First, for example, is women's overwhelming *desire for peace,* our support of movements for peace, and our rejection of the accumulation of arms.

Second, there is women's sense of *responsibility* as well as *care* for each other and for the survival of the whole. This may be expressed in the poignant commitment of a woman from a lower resource household to making any sacrifice, however physically dangerous or devastating to health, in order to keep the family alive. Or it may be expressed in the kind of caring that women do in other social situations, whether in working together as women's groups or in generating different work styles at their own place. A sense of *care* seems to stand out.

Third, there is a *rejection of hierarchy.* Women prefer to work in styles of equality and in situations of what we might call

"tentativeness"—the capacity to be moved and to change.

Fourth, there is an appreciation of the small-scale, which fosters the *capacity for self-reliance*. In the developing world, especially in its traditional sectors, be it agrarian or urban, women find themselves functioning in either subsistence households or in the self-employed sector, at least in non-socialist countries. In socialist countries, production for self-consumption is found in the "kitchen garden", a part of all peasant households whether in China or Vietnam. Such kitchen gardens seem to account for 40 to 60 per cent of the household's food consumption, and these gardens reveal a higher productivity rate than the collectives. In other words, women are still in the household sector, both for production and for self-consumption.

In industry, even though large parts of the economy are "organised" in the developed countries, women still play a role in the household sector; whereas in the developing world, which does not have the dominant organised sectors, women predominate in the small autonomous micro-production/consumption units.

Finally, there is a *sense* of *tradition*. Cultural and religious roots influence women. Traditions of carrying on the culture prevail. Women have links with the tradition, sometimes deriving strength from it through their own women's network. Through this they maintain some autonomy as women. At times, also, women suffer with the traditions.

The question is, Can we build on the tradition, and if so how? Can we draw upon women's own experience in moving toward the future? Can we find a philosophical, moral and ideological base for a feminist ethic? In my opinion, work in women and development has suffered from the lack of such an articulated base.

The Basis of a Feminist Ethic

What would be the basis of feminist action for social changes? To my mind, the basis would have to be the development of individual autonomy and self-reliance. Many

theologies of East and West have reflected on the question of individual "autonomy". But the idea of self-development and self-realisation as the basis for a moral society is not the popular idiom of the day.

Today the collective ethic is predominant. Terms like "organisation strategy" and "consciousness raising" really suggest the submersion of the individual. Whether we consider communes in socialist or liberal countries, or whether we consider such institutions as trade unions or the family elsewhere, the boundary is the group, not the individual. Ethics is asked of the group, not the individual, which has tended to erode the individual's sense of responsibility.

Women, however, still assume and face responsibilities as individuals, *in* the family. Women's traditional ethical norms are neither individualistc, nor group-centred. Rather, women seem to consider the individual in the context of the group. It should again be stressed that Gandhi's ethic of self-rule and self-reliance was *not* rugged individualism, but rather individual responsibility in the context of the community. Thus, a focus on individual morality, with its self-consciousness and self-control, would replace the aggregation of irresponsible individuals with a moral aggregation of responsible individuals. It would draw more of society into the kind of moral behaviour which women already follow in relation to their families.

For me as an Indian, familiar with the Hindu way of life, this emphasis on individual autonomy, with the goal of self-realisation, does not appear strange. This way of thinking provide the base for the non-violent freedom movement launched by Gandhi. While his use of non-violent resistance to liberate India is well known, his economic and political strategies, which he saw as part of the freedom struggle, are relatively less known.

I should elaborate on this, since the paradigm of a feminist ethic I am considering draws inspiration from Gandhi's views. For Gandhi, freedom from the British was only one step towards overall freedom. To him, self-reliance meant not only

liberation from foreign power, but liberation from internal domination of one another by classes and castes. The freedom struggle was the struggle to build self-reliance—from the individual level right up to the nation.

Swaraj ("home rule") was linked with *swadeshi* (the use of "self-made goods"), and *swadeshi* was linked with *swavalambh* ("self-reliance"). Self-made goods became Gandhi's platform, linking political with individual freedom. One should prevent not only exploitation by foreigners, but also exploitation by the owners of domestic capital. Gandhi stimulated consciousness among all classes of people that their interest lay in making India independent of British rule. But he did not limit himself to the simple phenomenon of separating British from Indian sovereignty. He tried to enable society to liberate itself from various forms of bondage—those imposed by outsiders, and those imposed by ourselves.

In relation to women, Gandhi saw straightaway that the roles assigned to them were due to the ignorance and lack of imagination of men. Women should not be in the kitchen, but in the forefront of public life. Women, according to Gandhi, have a highly developed sense of morality and responsibility, which should be used in national development.

To begin to change the position and status of women, Gandhi urged them to shed ornament, saying that the ornamentation they wear is part of men's conspiracy to make women into ornaments and possessions. He also suggested that food habits be simplified, including simply cooked or uncooked vegetables, hand-processed grains, and milk. This would reduce cooking, one of the tasks which holds women in bondage the world over. In this, Gandhi's ashrams went further than the kibbutz community in Israel or the communes of China, both of which have community kitchens. Gandhi emphasised simplicity in food habits, reducing unnecessary time for cooking.

Concerning men's unreflective use of women as workers, free labour and sex-objects, Gandhi went so far as to urge women to refuse to participate in sex, as a form of non-violent resistance to subordination by men. An entire generation of

women who fought with him took a pledge of celibacy, just to prove this point. They were not nuns, who are also celibate, considering themselves married to God. Rather they lived among men, and with men in cohabitation, but rejected their sexuality.

Some of these ideas may seem extremist and old fashioned, but Gandhi was reacting to what he felt was the terrible fact of Harijan and female subordination, in a caste-ridden, hierarchical and diverse society. Though many of his statements on women may seem jarring when read today, Gandhi seems to have been intuitively attuned to them, and to have seen women's potential more clearly than any other political or religious leader in any part of the world. He perceived women as equal, but different. In their difference, Gandhi himself identified with women. He took up women's ways and issues—such as the prohibition of liquor, self-reliance through spinning *khadi*, and production for self-consumption.

In short, the ethic of self-reliance seems to have several related principles. First, that of bread labour: that each individual should work daily for bread, producing as much as he or she needs to consume. Second, simplicity in life style, minimising one's wants and recognising that acquisitiveness is often the basis of aggression and injustice. Third, identification with the poor, visibly demonstrating by the simplicity of one's life a solidarity with the poor and a willingness to distribute resource, however scarce, evenly. Fourth, discipline of the mind and body, preparing in every way for the hardship and potential deprivation of a non-violent struggle.

Gandhian education, called "Basic Education", was based on the cultivation of such self-reliance. Children learned how to work, and learned through their work. They learned to grow food, to spin and weave cloth, and to clean toilets. An essential part of their schooling was to learn the elimination of inequality between the castes and the sexes.

On a larger scale, Gandhi's social vision was based on decentralisation—in social, political and economic units. Decentralisation fosters self-reliance. It avoids the perpetual

trend toward dependence by postulating a production pattern which has at the starting point self-consumption on the demand side, and an available set of locally accessible materials on the supply side. Consumption would be controlled to suit the production possibilities of those who have low resources and/or low skills. This seemed to Gandhi a viable place to begin generating greater equality without centralisation.

Finally, in considering the implications of Gandhian thought for a feminist ethic, let us remember his sustained and continuous reflection on the question of method, that the consonance of means and ends is crucial. It is this *way* of working that can be of great significance for us. It is clear from our discussion that a women's united platform need not be completely issue-based, but could well be methodology-based. Issues, by necessity, vary between classes, regions and cultures. For example, a crisis in the lives of the poorest women might be the immediate need for nutrition, wages, or water. In another class, the priority issue might be the right to divorce. Elsewhere, one hears that lesbian rights have become a frontal issue. The affluent in the developing countries may be looking for legal protection, property rights, better divorce laws, or equal opportunity in holding top decision-making posts. For the poorest, the issue may be how to prevent technological displacement from work, or how to prevent eviction.

Thus, particular issues which are very important for mobilising at the micro-level, and which provide the focus for building up women's solidarity and women's consciousness, do not necessarily provide a base for bringing women together from a wide diversity of areas and classes.

Methodologies, or ways of bringing about change, on the other hand, do provide some common territory. First, for example, the way of non-violence: the means of achieving an end must be consonant with the end. Peace cannot be secured by war; justice cannot be gained by trampling upon human rights. Thus, non-violent techniques and forms of peaceful resistance are the preferred method for developing a world of peace and justice. Second, the way of simplicity, expressed in the

ethics of consumption restraint, redirection of consumption patterns and the limitation of the field of wants and desires. Third, the way of self-reliance, expressed in individual, local and community-based self-reliance, as well as in wider policies of decentralisation.

It is here in such a methodology that Gandhian thought, feminist consciousness, and real progress toward development converge. The building of this consciousness has to be an integral part of the development process.

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Rs. 295

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JAIPUR - 302016 (India) PH. : 0141 -303669, 306013.